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THE STORY OF
THE SFORZAS

L. COLLISON-MORLEY

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[Alinari Photo]

BEATRICE D'ESTE
By Leonardo da Vinci

[Frontispiece]



THE STORY OF THE SFORZAS

By

L. COLLISON-MORLEY

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE BORGAS", ETC.



E. P. DUTTON AND COMPANY, INC.

PUBLISHERS

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TO
MY BROTHER
YEA

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PREFACE

THE name of Sforza suggests to most people the court of Ludovico Il Moro at Milan, one of the most brilliant, if not the most brilliant of the Renaissance in the years before the French invasion, when his Duchess, Beatrice d'Este, was its presiding goddess and it was honoured by the genius of Leonardo da Vinci and Bramante. But the Sforzas have another interest. Attendolo and Francesco were the first soldiers of their day and Francesco rose to the highest position ever attained by a condottiere. Round their names gathers the story of most of the fighting in Italy during the later years of the fourteenth century and the earlier years of the fifteenth, the great age of the mercenary captains. Francesco Sforza's long duel with Filippo Maria, the last of the Visconti, his gradual rise to power and his final conquest of the Duchy of Milan, the goal upon which all his efforts were long concentrated, is extraordinarily interesting not only in itself, but also for the light it throws upon the times.

New documents are continually being brought to light, especially in the pages of that inexhaustible source of information, the *Archivio Storico Lombardo*. Thus an article by Signor Dina has at last brought Ludovico's treatment of his nephew, which had often been defended as irreproachable by his admirers, into line with everything else that we know of him. Defence is no longer possible.

P R E F A C E

I should like to take the opportunity of acknowledging once for all my debt to Count Malaguzzi-Valeri's monumental work on the court of Ludovico Il Moro, with its profusion of invaluable illustrations: it is too great for me to acknowledge in detail.

L. C-M.

NORTH ITALY CIRCA 1490



CHAPTER I

MUZIO ATTENDOLO, THE GREAT SFORZA

COTIGNOLA was the cradle of the Sforza family, an ancient village a little to the North of Faenza, in the heart of the turbulent Romagna that lies along the Adriatic, over which it was long before the Papacy acquired more than a nominal control. Here Muzio Attendolo, who was to leave his nick-name of Sforza to his descendants, was born on May 28th, 1369. Though not noble, the family was of good position and comfortably off for those wild regions. It was also well able to hold its own, thanks to the number and vigour of its sons.

Apparently the Attendoli owed their success, their rise to an eminence far above that of any of their rivals in the great days of the condottieri, not so much to their father, Giovanni, who was, however, by no means lacking in force, as to their mother, Elisa dei Petraschini. These Petraschini were a notably factious and aggressive family even for Romagna. Nothing was more important for the mere survival of a house in a part of the world which was in many ways not unlike a brigand's camp, where feuds were incessant and memories long, than an ample supply of stalwart sons. Elisa was a splendid specimen of the *virago*, later idealized by Ariosto and Tasso, who could on occasion fight as well as her menfolk, and her descendant, Caterina Sforza, was the most famous *virago* of the Renaissance. Elisa, we are told, had the spirit of a man, was violent tempered and rough in her ways, of admirable chastity and fertility. She was the mother of one and twenty children. The males were

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born soldiers all, for Muzio was not the only one to win distinction as a condottiere ; indeed, no less than fifteen of the clan took to arms as a profession ; and the women showed themselves on occasion true daughters of their mother.

Their upbringing was well suited to the life they were to lead. They were taught to despise fine clothes, delicate food and soft beds. Their house, which was of stone in a village where most of the cottages were of wood, was more like a brigand's cave than a peaceful country gentleman's dwelling, notorious even in a part of the world where the most primitive comfort was then virtually unknown. The walls, Paolo Giovio tells us, were hung not with arras, but with shields and breastplates. Though this fact impressed the courtly Bishop of Nocera at the height of the Renaissance, it may be doubted whether the palaces even of princes who were to be rivals in arms of the Sforzas, such as their neighbours, the Malatesta of Rimini, were at that time ornamented very differently. More significant is it that the great beds had no covers of any kind. The Attendoli and their relatives flung themselves down upon them, just as they were, several together. The food was to match. There were no regular meals. The men ate whatever the grooms and stable lads prepared for them and it was as rough as it was simple.

Their great rivals in the village were the Ghibelline Pasolini, still a flourishing and distinguished family, a member of which, Count Pier Desiderio, may be said to have healed the feud for ever with his admirable life of Caterina Sforza. This feud, which was of long standing, came to a head in 1388, when Martino Pasolini seized the affianced bride of Bartolo Attendolo. The Attendoli acquiesced, but the Pasolini are said to have looked upon this as a slight to the girl and made a surprise attack upon them. Two of the Attendoli were killed and Muzio, then a young soldier home on

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leave, was wounded. The families met more than once in pitched battles. The feud was carried on into the fields, where the Pasolini worked with their armour on their backs and their pikes slung round their waists. The Attendoli would attack them while harvesting, "springing out upon them from the corn like snakes". In the end the Attendoli were victorious. Martino and others of the Pasolini left the neighbourhood and those who remained found it advisable to change their name.

Many of the best-known of the condottieri, or mercenary captains, came from Papal territory, from Romagna or the March of Ancona or Umbria, and naturally this was a favourite recruiting ground. The Attendoli, though prosperous in their way, were little more than peasants or small farmers in their manner of life. They worked in the fields themselves, carrying and marketing their own produce. One evening, in 1384, while Muzio was busy about the farm, some men of Boldrino da Panicale, a well-known condottiere, came by on a recruiting expedition. Several of the Attendoli had already enlisted in various corps and it needed but a glance for the party to see that the lad was of just the stamp they wanted, if they did not already know him. They stopped and chatted and chaffed him a little, telling him to be a man and come along with them and learn what a really good time was. It was just the life for a splendid lad like himself. Doubtless his brothers and cousins had said the same when they were home on leave, boasting of their conquests among the women and swaggering with the proceeds of their booty. Fifteen was not too young to start in those days of early maturity. Muzio hesitated. Finally he took his axe and tossed it into a tree, saying that, if it stuck, he would go with Boldrino's men; if it came down, he would stay at home. The axe stuck. That night Muzio ran away from home with a horse from his father's stable.

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This story, which was early current, is quite probable. It was a family tradition, for when Francesco Sforza II, Duke of Milan, was showing Paolo Giovio, who wrote the best of the early lives of Sforza, through the Castle at Milan, he remarked, looking gaily round, that they owed it all to the axe that stuck in the fatal bough. But the chronicler Corio, an ornament of the court of Ludovico Sforza, tells a more sober tale. Alberico da Barbiano, the first of the great Italian condottieri, came from a neighbouring village. His was the example—and this is not inconsistent with Giovio's story—that induced the boy to run away at the age of twelve with a horse of his father's, and join Boldrino. After four years he returned home, when his father, seeing that his heart was set upon a soldier's career, sent him off with four horses—a handsome present for a man in his position—and the paternal blessing. Thus well equipped, he was able to join Alberico da Barbiano, who promoted him rapidly.

Virtually the whole of the fighting in Italy during the fourteenth century was done by the great commanders of mercenaries, who put their swords at the disposal of any Power that was willing and able to hire them. They were an unfortunate product of the state of the peninsula at this time. The nobility, who had done most of the fighting in the Middle Ages, had been largely eliminated. On the one hand the rapid increase of prosperity, especially in the North, made the citizens only too glad to escape the burden of military service; and considering that Florence or Milan or Venice owed their position to their great merchants, there was something to be said for exempting them from fighting. On the other hand, neither the free cities, so torn by faction that they submitted to the rule of a foreign Podestà, nor the petty despots that had sprung up in others, were inclined to risk putting arms into the hands of the citizens.

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The earlier companies consisted entirely, or almost entirely of foreigners, led by foreigners, who began to find their way into Italy after 1360. The Peace of Brétigny set free a number of these bands who knew no other trade than fighting, learnt in the brutal school of the French wars. Of these early Companies of Adventure the most notorious was the Grand Company, raised and led by the gigantic Guarnieri, as the Italians called him, the Duke Werner von Urslingen. On his breastplate was his motto, "Enemy of God, of Pity and of Mercy", and he proclaimed that he intended to war upon the weak. Later, when led by Count Landau, the Grand Company was engaged by the formidable Cardinal Albornoz to help in the subjugation of the Romagna for the Papacy.

In various ways the connection between the Romagna and the condottieri was from the first very close. One of the most famous was the Englishman, Sir John Hawkwood, who was rewarded for his services to the Popes by the lordship of five towns there which included the village of Cotignola; and when he wished to fortify it, the land he required belonged to Giovanni Attendolo. The Malatesta of Rimini were condottieri for several generations, generally of the Papacy, as were the Montefeltri of Urbino, who won their Duchy by their prowess in arms. Braccio, Brandolini and others now forgotten came also from the district.

Acuto, as the Italians called Hawkwood, was, according to Matteo Villani, an Englishman, a great master of war, foxy and cunning by nature, as Englishmen are; and his White Company had as black a name as any. Hawkwood was responsible for two massacres long remembered as among the worst ever perpetrated by these mercenaries. When in 1376 Faenza, just south of Cotignola, showed signs of revolting from the Pope, Hawkwood was sent thither. Either because he had to find money for his men—a necessity

which was the cause of not a little of the worst sufferings of the population at the hands of the companies—or acting in accordance with orders, he imprisoned five hundred of the principal inhabitants and let his men pillage the town. No mercy was shown even to children and nuns. While a couple of Englishmen were fighting over a nun who was cowering in terror in a corner, Hawkwood himself is said to have appeared upon the scene and settled the difference by exclaiming “half each” and hacking her in two. When he had finished with Faenza he sold the town to the Marquis of Ferrara.

The Romagnols were the last people to submit tamely to treatment of this kind. Of these bands none were more notorious than the Bretons, who were therefore chosen by Cardinal Robert of Geneva to help bring the Romagnols to heel. When they were let loose upon them the inhabitants complained to Galeotto Malatesta, Lord of Rimini and Papal Condottiere. In an evil moment he told them quite truly that they could expect no justice except from themselves. Provoked beyond measure, the people of Cesena fell upon the Bretons with such vigour that they had killed three hundred of them before Malatesta induced them to desist by promising that they should be pardoned for what they had done. The Cardinal of Geneva sent for Acuto, who undertook to reduce them to order. He protested when the Cardinal insisted upon a general massacre, but in vain. The fate of Cesena was worse than that of Faenza and when Malatesta set about rebuilding the town a year later there were still five thousand corpses in the streets alone. In this atmosphere the Bretons spent the interval, unpaid and reduced to such straits that they were thankful to exchange an equal weight of the clothes of the late inhabitants for forage for their mounts.

This is how the hideous Cardinal Robert—Lo Zoppo, to give him his nickname, for he was lame—

celebrated the final return of the Papacy from Avignon. Early in the year Clement XI had entered Rome by the Porta S. Paolo, sorely against his will. Even the Romans of that day were so outraged by the massacre that they began to take up a threatening attitude towards the Pope and when he died in the following year, they would have none but an Italian successor. The days of trial that followed for the Church are lit up by the great figure of St. Catherine of Siena.

It is not surprising in the circumstances that Alberico da Barbiano—Barbiano was close to Cotignola—became the hero of young Romagnols of the type of the Attendoli. He was of noble birth and it is from him that the distinguished Milanese family of the Belgioioso traces its descent. He had won some name as a soldier when, disgusted at seeing Italy absolutely at the mercy of these hordes of half-savage foreigners, he determined to raise a company that consisted only of Italians. He had fought under Hawkwood, but left him after his massacres. His success was instantaneous, nowhere more so than in his own province. Indeed, the nucleus of his company was formed by Romagnols, mostly friends of his own, among them being several of the Attendoli. His men took a solemn vow of hatred towards the foreigner, whom they swore to drive from the peninsula. He took service with Giangaleazzo Visconti, the great Duke of Milan, and such was his success that he soon found himself at the head of eight hundred lances. At first he was obliged to fight shoulder to shoulder with the foreign companies, but it was not long before these were exterminated or driven out of Italy. By the end of the century the forces that carried on the endless wars in the peninsula were all Italian, except a few of the old troopers who took service with the Italian condottieri.

Alberico called his company the Company of St. George and it was under him that virtually all the best

Italian commanders learnt the art of war. He was not only a great leader, but a master of his profession, into which he introduced some important innovations. He it was who invented the visor to the helmet and the neck piece behind. He also had the horses protected by elaborate leather caparisons.

At a time when brute force was supreme, the power lay largely with the condottieri and the chronicles are often little more than a record of their doings. The Venetian aristocracy alone was able to control them effectively. The rise of the Italian commanders gave their companies a permanence and a cohesion such as they had not possessed before and the devotion of his men to a successful condottiere was proportionate. When Boldrino da Panicale was murdered at Macerata the town was made to submit to the severest humiliations by way of penance. His body was placed in a precious coffin, carried everywhere and treated by his men as if he were still their general. They deemed no one worthy to replace him.

With all their faults, these companies absorbed much of the best of the manhood of the day. They provided the best scope for the spirit of adventure. Their countrymen began to talk with pride of the leading condottieri and their prowess and stories of their doings passed from mouth to mouth. Though they sold their swords to the highest bidder and their ways were rough, their conduct was strictly in accordance with the moral outlook of the day and at least they were Italians. Alberico, in fact, as Paolo Giovio puts it, "indignant that foreign mercenaries should wreak their will upon Italy, giving full vent to their cruelty unchecked, revived the spirit of his countrymen who, from slackness and from having lost their liberty, had fallen from their ancient fame as fighters."

The future of a young man enlisting in one of these companies was in his own hands. As in every side of the life of the Renaissance in Italy, birth counted for

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little. If he caught the eye of his chief, he would be promoted and put in charge of a squad. His further rise would depend upon his courage and resource, his popularity and above all on his gift for command. Young recruits would naturally join the troop of a promising officer. Gradually he would find himself with sufficient reputation and men to act independently and make his own terms with his employers. Contracts were duly drawn up by princes or states in strict legal form with these condottieri, or even with commanders of small *schiere*, at the time of engagement, and the conditions were expected to be rigidly observed. The difficulties of a condottiere and the troubles of the non-combatants generally began when he found himself out of an engagement and with no money to pay his men.

A successful condottiere rivalled the great nobles and even princes in the state he maintained. To them we owe some splendid monuments, including what are probably the greatest equestrian statues of the modern world—Colleoni and Paolo Savelli at Venice and Gattamelata at Padua, though of what might well have been the best of them all, the statue of Francesco Sforza, by Leonardo da Vinci, nothing now survives. Then there is the fine bust of a condottiere by Pollaiuolo in the Uffizi in Florence, and the fresco of Sir John Hawkwood in the Cathedral there by Paolo Uccello. For Vanni Acuto died in Florence just when he was hoping to return to his own country, being buried with much ceremony as became one who had done the state great services. The chapel of St. George in the cathedral of Pisa was built by her captains, and Bergamo can boast the Colleoni chapel. Indeed, it is by these rather than by their feats of arms that they live for us to-day.

Yet in his life of the Great Sforza Paolo Giovio, in his vivid way, has succeeded in giving us a key to this vanished world, putting us on terms with the

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condottieri and showing us the habits of the camp and the field as no later writer has managed to do. For the Bishop of Nocera felt for Sforza some of the hero-worship of his contemporaries, the hero-worship inspired in Sforza himself by Alberico da Barbiano. To us, who know the end of the story and can see the disastrous results of the system in the long period of foreign domination, it may seem strange. All the good that came from the self-seeking and individualism of the Renaissance, which was as disastrously disintegrating in the political as in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere, is to be found in the literature and above all in the art that has no rival in the modern world.

Muzio Attendolo spent twelve or fifteen years with Alberico da Barbiano and here it was that he gained his reputation for strength and dominating force of character. Many of the condottieri are known by their nicknames. Thus Gattamelata is the tabby cat, Facino Cane the dog, Tartaglia, always at enmity with Sforza, the stammerer. The story goes that Muzio quarrelled with the Tarantula and the Scorpion, two brothers from Lugo, the village just north of Cotignola, about the division of some booty. When the dispute was referred to headquarters, his truculent answer to Alberico made him exclaim that he was trying to *sforzare* him also and declare that henceforth he should be known as Sforza. Sforza also possessed enormous strength. He could bend a horseshoe and leap into the saddle when clad in full armour with one hand on the horse.

It was while under Alberico that he met his future rival, Braccio da Montone. The two were destined to become the greatest Italian generals of their day, the leaders of two different schools; indeed the whole fighting world in the Peninsula was divided into Sforzeschi and Bracceschi. Yet, as young men in the Company of St. George, they were bosom friends. They shared everything in common, even using the

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same uniforms and devices for their men. Nor, in spite of serious differences, were the effects of this early friendship ever quite extinguished. If Sforza was as consistently lucky as Braccio was the reverse, he owed his success to his character, and to the sound common sense, with his clear grasp of the relations of means to ends, which was lacking in Braccio. Sforza might be a reincarnation of a Roman of the best days of the Republic, both in his good qualities and in his limitations, while Braccio had not a little of the Romantic in him.

Andrea, known as Braccio, arm, probably for his strength, was of the family of the Counts of Montone and a noble of Perugia. He had been badly wounded and exiled in one of the murderous party feuds which caused such havoc there, and in which the great House of the Baglioni were generally concerned. Being left an orphan, he took service under Alberico da Barbiano. When at last he raised an independent troop, ill-luck dogged him from the first. He was reduced almost to beggary and then, as soon as he succeeded in getting on his feet again, a disastrous fire at Foligno destroyed all he had in the world. The inhabitants contributed generously towards the making good of his losses, but he was obliged to return to Alberico. His ability won him the favour of his old commander, but this only aroused bitter jealousy against him, which possibly his manner was not calculated to allay. Convinced of his insubordination by the calumnies of officers whom he trusted, Alberico gave his sanction to their murdering him. Alberico's wife interceded for him, but when her appeals failed, such was her disgust at the treachery, that she warned Braccio, who at once went over to the Pope. Discovering his mistake, Alberico did all in his power to induce him to return, but Braccio replied that a commander who could treat a loyal officer so shamefully did not deserve to be trusted.

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The times were treacherous, and this was not the only occasion when Braccio experienced such treatment. Not long afterwards, in 1409, Ladislas, King of Naples, who was little troubled by qualms of conscience, made him offers which he accepted, proposing to help him get possession of his native Perugia, a project which was always dear to the exile's heart. In despair, the Perugians offered to put themselves into the hands of the King, on condition that he threw over the Perugian exiles who were fighting for him and compassed the death of Braccio. Once again the condottiere received timely warning. When the King sent for him, he excused himself on the plea of illness. Characteristically furious at having been found out in his unlovely schemes, Ladislas sent a formidable army against the general who had just accepted his offers.

While with Alberico, Sforza was generally fighting for Giangaleazzo Visconti, the powerful lord of Milan; but when at last he found himself with a command of his own, he was on the opposite side, helping Perugia in her desperate struggle to escape from the Visconti viper. For two years he succeeded, aided by the indomitable spirit of the Perugians. As in politics, effective opposition was among the best ways of opening the eyes of a chief to the merits of a soldier. Giangaleazzo, in his unrelenting purpose of building up a strong independent kingdom in North Italy, made a point of keeping the best of the condottieri in his service and Sforza was soon fighting for him at double his old salary. But, as in the case of Braccio, success awakened jealousy, and the calumnies spread about him led to his ignominious dismissal from Milan. So dangerous was his position that he had to fly for his life.

Sforza now took service with Florence against Pisa, which was defended by his old commander, Alberico da Barbiano. Here began his long feud with the

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condottiere Tartaglia, who had also been taken into the pay of the Florentines. At one time so bitter was the feeling between them that there was a possibility of the two turning their arms against each other instead of against the enemy, and it was found necessary to keep their men, as well as the leaders, apart. Rupert, King of the Romans, an ally of the Florentines, shared to the full the high opinion in which Sforza was held and showed it by granting him his own lion rampant for his arms. It is said to have been at his suggestion that the quince (cotigna) of his native town, which Sforza had used hitherto, was placed in its paw. Ultimately the coat of arms was completed by the Sforza helmet with its winged dragon having the head of a man.

About this time, too, Sforza made the acquaintance of Lucia Tregani, or di Terzano, a girl of gentle birth, who remained his mistress for many years. She bore him no less than seven children, among them his heir, Francesco, the future Duke of Milan, who was born at San Miniato on July 23rd, 1401. It is said that he won Lucia by his obvious devotion and by promising marriage, but at a time when the marriage laws were so lax, her position was but little less regular than that of a wife.

In 1405, while Sforza was still at Pisa, Martino Pasolini of Cotignola came to him without a safe-conduct and with his breast-plate slung round his neck, flung himself on his knees and implored him to forgive him and end the feud between the families. Sforza was never vengeful. He took Martino to his tent, gave him a meal, and, after rebuking him for taking the risk of coming without a safe-conduct, completely forgave him.

In 1408 Sforza was on a campaign with the Marquis of Ferrara and the other princes who were leagued against Ottobono Terzi of Parma. Ottobono was one of the petty despots who were perpetually being

raised to power and then overthrown in those days of fierce faction. The events that followed are eminently characteristic of the times, but they are also one of the very few doubtful spots upon Sforza's remarkably honourable record.

During a skirmish in this campaign Sforza succeeded in unhorsing Ottobono and was about to make an end of him, when the Parmesan troops rallied and not only rescued their master, but drove back the enemy and captured Michele Attendolo, who was to be the most distinguished soldier of the clan after Sforza himself. Ottobono vented his spite by starving and torturing his prisoners unmercifully for the next four months, when they succeeded in escaping. Sforza vowed vengeance. Shortly afterwards Ottobono invited his enemies to a conference in a meadow surrounded by woods. In express violation of the conditions of the truce the Marquis of Ferrara concealed a number of his men in these woods. Ottobono rode up, as had been agreed, unarmed, on a jennet, but the Marquis was accompanied by an escort, Sforza amongst them, fully armed. When Ottobono protested, Sforza said that he never went unarmed. According to his habit Sforza was riding a high mettled horse, which was soon careering about the field, kicking right and left. This was as Sforza intended, for he was thus able to get close to Ottobono. When he was within striking distance, he seized him by the right hand, drew his dagger, and drove it home with such force that the jennet was injured. Ottobono fell to the ground mortally wounded; Michele Attendolo dismounted and finished him off. The men-at-arms broke from the woods and captured all the escort. Ottobono's body was taken to Modena, where the exiles from Parma and Reggio vented their hatred by tearing it with their teeth. Such savagery was by no means unusual in the bitter feuds of the day, especially in the more disturbed regions. Sforza was soon able

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to put the Marquis in possession of Ottobono's towns.

Sforza also saw service with the Popes, but the affairs of the Papacy were generally in dire confusion during these days of the great schism when there were often three and always two claimants to the triple tiara. It was while in Papal employ that in 1409 Count Salimbeni, the Lord of Cortona, head of a noble house of Siena, suggested that he should marry his sister, Antonia, who had just become a widow. Sforza had the views of his day about marriage, which was then entirely a matter of business. He realized that he could now look higher than Lucia di Terzano, the admirable mother of his large family, and it is quite probable that she, like a French girl of the *petite bourgeoisie* to-day, fully sympathized with his views. But he treated her honourably, as men generally did treat the women with whom they had lived long and who had given them a number of children. He married her to one of his officers. Antonia brought him four castles and became the mother of a son, Bosio, who grew up to be a promising cavalry officer, but was killed young. He married the heiress of the Counts of Santa Fiora, in Tuscany, where his descendants ruled till the middle of the seventeenth century, thus surviving all other branches of the House of Sforza.

Naturally the Papal Treasury was not then in a very flourishing condition, and John XXIII saw no possibility of paying Sforza the 4,000 ducats he owed him, so he was induced to give him the lordship of Cotignola instead. Sforza said that it was the proudest moment of his life when he found himself lord of his native village. A little later, when Cotignola was almost entirely destroyed by fire, he sent large sums for re-building it in a better style, with a special message of comfort to his mother, who was still alive. The Attendolo house, being of stone, escaped.

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Possibly owing to the state of the Papal Treasury, possibly because he objected to fighting alongside his deadly enemy, Paolo Orsini, Sforza ended by accepting the generous terms offered him by Ladislas of Naples. John XXIII was furious at this desertion to the enemy and had him depicted hanging by one leg as a traitor, after the fashion of the time, with an inscription beginning,

Io sono Sforza, villano di Cotignola.

Henceforth for the rest of his life Sforza was involved in the troubled and ever shifting politics of the Southern Kingdom. Among the hostages he was obliged to give up to his new master as a guarantee for good conduct was his eldest son, Francesco, then aged eleven. Ladislas gazed at him with amazement, says Corio, the loyal Sforza chronicler, as "*una cosa divina*", endowed with all the gifts Fortune could bestow upon a mortal being. Francesco had been left in charge of his mother at Ferrara, since her husband, Marco Fogliano, belonged to that town, and had been educated with the young princes, the sons of Niccolò d'Este. Ladislas gave the boy several towns and made him Count of Tricarico.

Giovanna II succeeded her brother, Ladislas, in 1414, and the ground became even more slippery. This unhappy woman, whose lust has done not a little to win for her great-aunt, Giovanna I, her reputation as a modern Semiramis, was now forty. Since the death of her husband she had gone her own way, giving full rein to her temperament and taking lover after lover. Weak, vain, and quite unbalanced, she was entirely under the thumb of the lover of the moment, but as they realized that they could never trust her, they treated her much as a bully does a prostitute, often using actual physical violence. There was now no hope of an heir and the situation was still further complicated by the rivalry between the two princes who claimed the succession, Louis d'Anjou

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and Alfonso of Aragon. Sforza had a clever peasant's shrewdness, but he was a soldier, a man of his hands, rather than of his brain. Naturally frank and open, he was ill at ease amid the supple intrigue, deceit and treachery of the corrupt Neapolitan court, which was then at its very worst. Though in later life he learnt to some extent to conceal his feelings, those who knew him could always tell when he was lying.

The Queen cast covetous eyes on the tall, powerful, erect soldier, with his olive skin and grave expression, his small, deep-set blue eyes and shaggy brows and the waist which he could span easily with his great, hairy peasant's hands. She liked to chat with him after a council, and his rough, ready, sharp soldier's wit obviously made an impression. Pandulfo Alopo, the ill-bred, shifty, effeminate favourite of the moment, took alarm. Thanks to his insinuations to Giovanna, Sforza was arrested and spent four months in the Castel Nuovo, Alopo giving out that he had meant to marry the Queen.

While in prison Sforza is said to have spent his time learning to write the cypher with which he afterwards signed all his documents, for he was no scholar; indeed, he used to say that it was impossible for the same hand to hold the sword as well as the pen. But he was an assiduous reader of the great classical historians, which he had translated for him. He gave his translator of Caesar and Sallust a good house and garden in gratitude for the work. He shared the unbounded respect felt by his contemporaries for the new learning. He was also fond of reading the poems on the lives of Charlemagne and his Paladins on winter evenings in camp or in bad weather, commenting upon their deeds and holding them up as models to his men. He dictated his letters, preferring monks as secretaries, because, he used to say, they were meant to poke their noses into everything and there was nothing in which they did not meddle with unchecked

and always unpunished hypocrisy, on the plea of religion.

However, Sforza's men remained loyal and when there was serious danger of a rising among the nobles, Alopo, realizing that he could not do without the soldier, was the first to seek a reconciliation. He suggested that it should be cemented by a marriage between Sforza and his sister, Catella. Sforza consented and in a short while he found himself Grand Constable of the kingdom at a salary of 8,000 ducats and lord of a number of castles, Benevento and Manfredonia among them. He thus identified himself with Alopo's party and when the Queen married Jacques de la Marque, in order to regularize her position, and Alopo was beheaded, he was involved in his fall. One of his most implacable enemies was Master of the Ceremonies when he went to pay his respects to his new over-lord. Sforza had a fiery temper and from words they soon came to blows, drawing their swords. Both men were arrested, but, while Sforza's adversary was released at once, there was every likelihood that Sforza would follow Alopo to the block. He was imprisoned in the Castel dell'Ovo and tortured to make him give up the pass-words of his castles, but in vain. He owed his deliverance entirely to his sister, Margherita, who showed herself a true daughter of her mother, a *virago* of the best. There were always a number of the Attendoli in the Southern Kingdom, following in Sforza's footsteps. Margherita had been left in charge of Tricarico. When envoys were sent to arrange for its surrender with Michele Attendolo, she appeared in full armour, sword in hand, and, declaring that she, as being in command, could not recognize his safe-conduct, she seized them, promising to put them to a horrible death if any evil befell her brother. The relatives of her prisoners soon procured Sforza's release.

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Braccio now re-enters the story. Sforza always did his best to check plundering and protect non-combatants, punishing all excesses and never sacking a town if he could help it. But Braccio sacked, butchered and robbed without mercy, driving a horde of prisoners before him like the worst of the old foreign condottieri and ruthlessly sacrificing the civil population to his men. Delivered from all fear of Ladislas, he had been making war wholesale and seizing a number of castles with the object of acquiring the lordship of his native Perugia, the darling scheme of his life.

He was also taking other companies into his pay, Michele Attendolo's among them. To him he promised that he would regard all Sforza's castles in the Romagna as held in trust and refrain from attacking them. But Tartaglia, whom he also engaged, refused all terms except that he should be given the castles of his enemy. Braccio hesitated; it was in 1416 and Sforza was in prison; but he ended by yielding. This treachery Sforza never forgave and henceforth there was deadly enmity between the two old comrades. Michele Attendolo was in a tight place. He was saved only by the courage and devotion of a young officer who came to his assistance unasked. His name was Niccolò Piccinino, who was destined to be the rival of young Francesco Sforza. Piccinino—Tiny—is also a nickname. So small was he that once, when defeated in the Brescia region by Francesco, a great German trooper picked him up, put him in a sack, slung it on his back, and escaped with his general through the enemy lines.

Supported by large bodies of exiles, Braccio made a determined attack on Perugia. Carlo Malatesta, who defended the town, hastened to the rescue and the battle that ensued was long remembered. The victory went to Braccio, in spite of inferior numbers, largely owing to his habit of breaking up his men in small

detachments. This method of fighting was his contribution to the military science of the day. He also wisely organized a good supply of water to refresh them, for it was the height of summer.

Once master of Perugia, Braccio proved a good ruler. He endeavoured to put an end to the feuds that had hitherto rent the city and his system of training his countrymen to arms was successful and popular. He rapidly made himself master of many of the outlying towns in the Romagna. But this was not enough. He had designs upon Rome itself. His attempt on the city, however, was foiled by Sforza, on whose approach he was obliged to withdraw his forces, the climate having taken heavy toll of his men.

In 1416 Sforza seized the opportunity of marrying his son Francesco. The bride was Polissena Ruffo, Countess of Montalto. The ceremony was at her Calabrian home, whither Francesco was escorted by a number of his father's veterans. The dowry consisted of 20,000 ducats and several towns. The marriage ended tragically, as the bride and her first child, a daughter, were poisoned in little more than a year by an aunt, who seized her property.

Francesco had given proof of his courage in the previous year when he took part in his first engagement. Sforza had endeavoured to get possession of his enemy, Tartaglia, whom he enticed into an ambush of the type that was dear to the condottiere heart, but such was the vigour with which Tartaglia turned upon his enemies that he cut his way out and escaped. Yet in 1419, after being badly beaten by Braccio and wounded, Sforza actually induced Tartaglia to serve under him and cemented the engagement by marrying one of his daughters to Tartaglia's son. Such bewildering changes of front are continually occurring in the kaleidoscopic shiftings of the careers of these mercenary captains.

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Sforza gave his son three pieces of advice at parting, which have often been repeated—never to touch the wife of another man ; never to beat a servant or a comrade, but, if he were betrayed into so doing, to get rid of him at once ; never to ride a hard-mouthed horse. He himself had been in difficulties more than once through neglecting these precepts. According to Count Pasolini, Sforza's weakness for the other sex shocked even his own men, and Francesco was to show himself a true son of his father in this respect. The advice has a peasant's shrewdness, as has his other dictum that, if you have three enemies, you should make peace with the first, a truce with the second and then turn upon the third with all your strength.

Sforza's attitude towards religion comes from the same mint and suggests that of an ancient Roman. It was not for a soldier to trouble God with foolish ceremonial and hypocritical prayers. Killing, plunder and burning are inevitable in war and a general must often wink at even heinous crimes. A good commander, he would say, should endeavour to fight for the best cause, avoid rape, plunder and butchery as much as possible and spare his men to the utmost. Sforza heard Mass daily, and, if he was obliged to miss a day, he heard two on the next ; once a year he confessed with profound contrition and took the sacraments with the deepest humility. He braved infection freely in nursing his relatives when in danger. His attitude towards enemies and offenders was very varied, depending largely on his interests at the moment. He was always careful to pay his creditors, with the result that he never wanted for money when in difficulties.

Whatever his attitude in other matters, in the camp Sforza was a rigid disciplinarian. No mercy was shown to spies or traitors, while a thief of forage was punished by being tied to the tail of a horse. In everyday life he was indifferent to clothes, with a

profound contempt for foppishness in any form, but he would punish a stain or a little rust on a coat of mail, with the highly-flavoured abuse of the times. He once rated a man in the face of the enemy for appearing in rusty armour after being in winter quarters, and forced him to fight with his visor up, so that he could be recognized. A man who went about the camp decked with splendid plumes was hissed. But on parade days, when, in accordance with the terms of most contracts, a condottiere's command was periodically inspected in full array by his employer or his agents, Sforza's men had no rivals. Men and horses alike were resplendent in gold, silver and silk. One remembers the magnificent figure of the condottiere in the fresco by Simone Martini in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena. In undress Sforza wore a purple cap, pyramidal in shape, of the kind that look so strange on the heads of the generals of the day when they are painted in them. Like other soldiers, he was obliged to keep his hair short and to shave, on account of the helmet. His taste in food was, as might be expected, of the simplest, but he liked an ample table with cheerful company.

Sforza could bear a great misfortune, as he could bear cold and other hardships, with courage. Heat alone bothered him. He suffered from a consuming thirst and always had a horse well laden with water and wine close at hand when fighting in summer. He could not bear ridicule. In this we may see his peasant origin, with which his enemies often twitted him. He could, however, hold his own on occasion, as in his answer to Sergianni Caracciolo, which is quite unquotable. He also knew how to use ridicule as an effective punishment. When a young officer of good birth persisted, in defiance of his orders, in keeping a girl who went about with him dressed in boy's clothes, he made him ride through the camp dressed as a woman.

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In 1417 the great schism came to an end. Martin V, the Colonna Pope, reigned without a rival. Three years later, in February, 1420, he visited Florence, whither he summoned the two leading condottieri to meet him. Braccio was the hero of the hour and it is from this visit that the old song, which is still sung, dates :

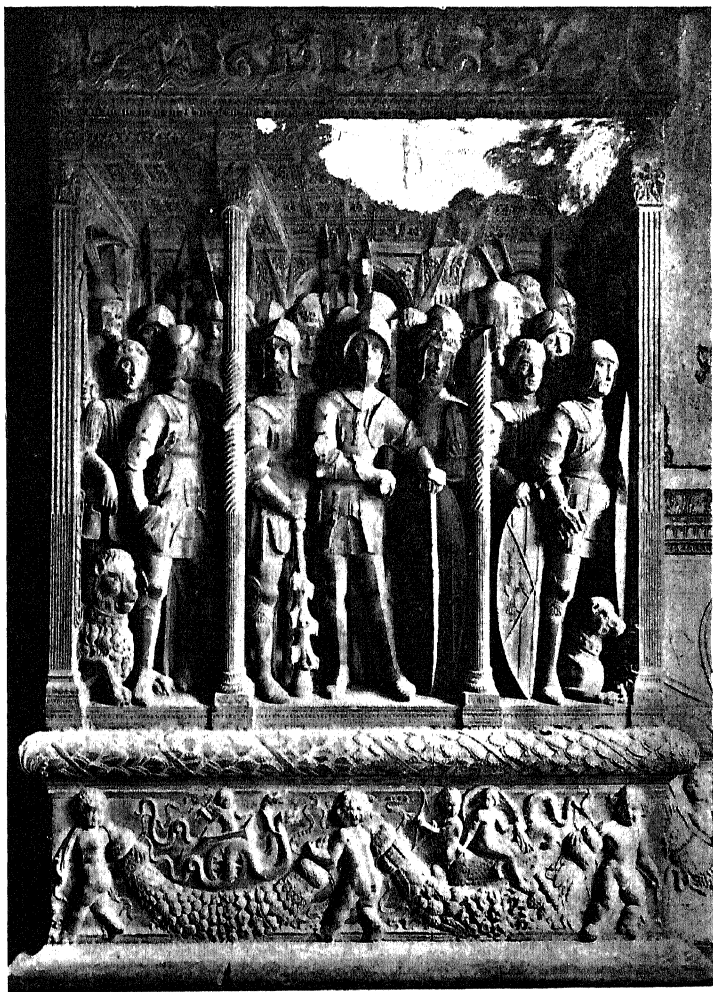
Braccio valente
Vince ogni gente ;
Il Papa Martino
Non vale un quattrino.

It cannot have been altogether to the taste of the first Pope of the new era, but it shows the position to which the Papacy had sunk. Braccio was escorted into Florence by four hundred of his finest men-at-arms in magnificent armour on their huge horses. He himself rode with his staff, the magistrates and the ambassadors, clad in a gorgeous purple robe embroidered with gold and silver. Thus arrayed he made his way through the rough, noisy crowd amid cries of " Braccio ! Braccio ! " to the Palazzo del Comune, where the Pope was waiting to receive him in state ; and the Lord of Perugia was made Papal Vicar of all the towns and castles he had won in Papal territory. This was the way in which the Popes managed to maintain a hold on the towns which were continually being filched from them.

For the rest of their days Sforza and Braccio were to be fighting on opposite sides in the struggle that tore the kingdom of Naples. Sforza was now the declared enemy of the Queen, or rather of her new lover, Giovanni—generally known as Sergianni—Caracciolo and a supporter of the claims of Louis d'Anjou, who made him his Grand Constable. Giovanna therefore sent for Braccio and made Alfonso of Aragon her heir. Alfonso, who was to be one of the most brilliant of the Italian princes of the early Renaissance, was a chivalrous adversary. On one

occasion, when he had captured an officer of Sforza's, he asked him to point out his general. After some difficulty the prisoner made him out, fighting heroically in the very thickest of the battle. "He is the bravest captain of our day," exclaimed Don Alfonso. "Go and tell him so from me." And he gave orders that in future his men should not fire upon Sforza, who replied by forbidding his own troops to attack the royal galley. Don Alfonso was a Spaniard and a man of birth. Such chivalry was little known among the Italian condottieri, professionals who fought for profit and nothing else.

About this time Braccio found it advisable to make some difference between the colours of his own men and those of Sforza. He adopted the device of his wife, in which the red and blue waving stripes were somewhat narrower than those hitherto used by the two old friends. Now, too, Sforza got rid of his bitter enemy, Tartaglia, who never appears to have fought loyally for him. Intercepted letters, presents of horses from Don Alfonso—possibly these were a deliberate trick for broadening the breach between the pair—and several acts of characteristic disobedience, if not worse, gave ample grounds for suspicion. It is not surprising that Braccio showed the utmost courtesy to any of Tartaglia's men whom he captured, for Tartaglia had long fought under him and he doubtless hoped to lure him away from Sforza. The Pope and the Duc d'Anjou were satisfied of his guilt. One night his house in Aversa was surrounded, he was taken out of bed half naked, tortured till he confessed and immediately executed in the market square. To Tartaglia's men this ignoble end of a beloved leader seemed the revenge of a personal enemy. They refused the Pope's most tempting offers, declining to serve in a body under any other condottiere. They preferred to disband and most of them were soon fighting in the Aragonese camp.



[Alinari Photo]

A GROUP OF MEN-AT-ARMS

Detail from the Triumphal Arch of Alfonso of Aragon

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Sforza now married again, when over fifty. His third wife had been the widow of Louis II of Anjou, who died before the marriage was consummated, and then of the Count of Celano, who made her his heir. She brought him a number of castles. By her he had a son, Gabriele, who, tiring of a soldier's life, became a monk and was made Archbishop of Milan by his half-brother, Francesco.

Once again the see-saw of Neapolitan politics gave Sforza unexpected allies. The Pope, alarmed by the threats of Don Alfonso, deserted Louis d'Anjou. Sergianni Caracciolo, whose domination of the Queen was now complete, had no intention of serving where he had once commanded, so he determined to come to terms with Sforza and pit him against Alfonso of Aragon. Sforza had been thrown over both by the Pope and by Louis d'Anjou, and was completely without funds to pay his men. A condottiere would naturally welcome such a proposal.

Braccio, of all people, was chosen as the intermediary. The two rivals had their last meeting, their first amicable one for many years, at Braccio's headquarters, a tent pitched in a meadow, in 1422. They indulged in a long and quite friendly talk and it is said that they exchanged confidences about the acts of treachery that had been perpetrated in the camp of the one against the other. Sforza learnt that he had been justified in his suspicions of Tartaglia. The next day he accompanied Braccio for some miles on his road towards Umbria. His subsequent reception by the Queen was most friendly.

So disgusted was Don Alfonso at this treatment that he seized and imprisoned Caracciolo. The Queen just managed to escape to the Castel Capuano, where she was besieged. Sforza hastened to her relief, though he had only 6,000 horse and 300 foot. But experience made up for inferior numbers. The Aragonese were thrown into confusion by a cleverly devised attack

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in the rear and completely routed. The booty was very rich. Giovanna was rescued and carried off to Aversa, where she once again made Louis her heir in place of Don Alfonso, and Sforza was obliged to surrender a number of Catalan prisoners for the precious Sergianni.

Sforza now collected all his forces with a view to relieving Aquila, which was being besieged by Braccio, who had entered the service of Alfonso of Aragon and had been made Prince of Capua. Corio records several omens foreboding disaster, a dream, a fall of Sforza's standard-bearer which broke the pole and befouled the flag and a neglected warning of the astrologers never to cross a river on Monday. The river Pescara separated the two armies. Braccio had erected defences on his bank. As Braccio showed no signs of coming out to attack him, Sforza decided to hold him in check, while his son, Francesco, and Michele Attendolo forded the river with 400 horse and made their way into the town. After various attempts Francesco suggested that they should cross the river near the mouth, where Braccio had neither sunk boats in the stream, nor planted stakes in the bank to impede the horses. The attempt was successful and the Bracceschi were driven back, whereupon Sforza ordered the rest of his men to follow. It was mid-winter—January 4th, 1424—and a strong wind had sprung up, making the water at the mouth of the Pescara very rough. As his men hesitated, Sforza plunged once more into the river to fetch them himself. His page, who came after him with his helmet, was soon in difficulties. Seeing his distress, Sforza bent down from the saddle and caught him by the hair, whereupon his horse reared up and lost its footing and Sforza was thrown into the stream. Did he owe his death to his weakness for a horse with a delicate mouth? Encumbered by his armour, he sank at once, but it is said that his

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gauntleted hands appeared twice above the water, clasped together.

There is no more attractive figure among the Italian condottieri than Attendolo Sforza. He was a soldier whose ambitions did not rise above his profession, and who shows it at its best. He might be a Roman who had strayed from the best days of the Republic into the Italian Quattrocento.

When the news reached Francesco, victory was already assured. He crossed the river in a boat and appealed to the men in one of the elaborate speeches which were then so highly prized, to remain loyal to him and follow him as they had done his father. The enthusiasm with which they received him left no doubt of their intentions ; for they had already learnt to love and respect him.

Braccio was much moved at the news, which he at first refused to believe. It had been predicted that he would not long survive Sforza, who was a few months his senior, and Aquila was to prove fatal to them both. Francesco was already the virtual leader of the Queen's army ; with him were Michele and Lorenzo Attendolo and also the Papal troops. Braccio, whom the Pope did not forgive for having seized Perugia, had once promised to make Martin V say a hundred masses for a penny. So sure was he of victory that he did not attempt to check the enemy as they came slowly down the steep cliffs to the small plain before the town, leading their horses ; he even sent men to the heights to prevent their escape. Braccio was heavily outnumbered, but his were the better soldiers and if he had had sufficient men to charge when the Sforzeschi began to waver, he would probably have won the day. Michele Attendolo rallied his men, Francesco's black plumes were there for them to follow, always in the thick of the fighting. Braccio, on hearing who he was, is said to have remarked that he was a true son of Sforza. In spite of all he could do the day went

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against him. Contrary to the rules of mercenary warfare, Michele Attendolo bade his men strike at the horses, thus quickly putting a thousand men-at-arms out of action, and a sortie of the people of Aquila completed the rout. To escape recognition, Braccio threw away his helmet, which was ornamented with a silver garland, crimson cloth and silver balls, but he was recognized and mortally wounded by a Perugian exile. He was carried back to his tent on a shield, where he lived three days without recovering consciousness.

CHAPTER II

FRANCESCO SFORZA AND FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI

His victory at Aquila gave Francesco a great reputation. Young as he was, it placed him at once in the first rank of the condottieri and he had the additional advantage of being in command of a large army. The Queen was much distressed at the death of Sforza. After confirming Francesco's rights to all his father's lands and castles, she bade him and all his brothers assume the name of Sforza in order to perpetuate their father's memory. However, Francesco did not stay long in her service. Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, on the advice of the Milanese admiral who was helping the Queen, offered him the command of 1,500 horse and 300 foot. Thus in 1424 Francesco Sforza began his association with the Duchy with which his whole life was to be bound up.

Filippo Maria was the surviving son of Giangaleazzo Visconti, the first Duke of Milan, who had been carried off just when he was embarking upon a final struggle with Florence, which alone stood between him and the completion of the kingdom he was building up with a mixture of consummate ability and unabashed treachery that stands unique in the history of Italy. He it was who had at last placed his dynasty upon a legal footing by buying the title of Duke from the penniless Emperor Wencilas for a goodly price. "This most excellent prince", says the chronicler Corio, "was a man very prudent and cunning, but of solitary life, avoiding as far as possible fatigue, timid in adverse fortune, but most daring in prosperity; and he dissembled many times; he was splendid and prodigal

to such a degree that he exhausted not only his own purse, but also that of his subjects, reducing many to dire poverty ; in time of need he promised much, but rarely kept his word ; ambitious to spread his name through the world, he was, of all the Italian princes, the most successful in his undertakings." Giangaleazzo was deeply religious in his own way and a great collector of relics and it is to him that Milan owes her two most splendid monuments, the Certosa of Pavia and the Cathedral.

Obedient to family tradition, Giangaleazzo had divided his Duchy between his two sons. Giovanni Maria, the eldest, was to be Duke of Milan, while Filippo Maria was to rule under him at Pavia, just as Giangaleazzo had done till he anticipated the plans of his uncle Bernabò, seizing and imprisoning him and his sons by a carefully prepared ruse unequalled in cunning even in his career. But at his death his condottieri, who had been controlled and directed by his masterly brain, either began fighting for their own hand or, more often, helped the families dispossessed by the Visconti to recover their states ; for, bad though the rule of these petty despots generally was, their hereditary rights gave them a glamour in the eyes of their subjects which always made them dangerous to a usurper.

Giovanni Maria was one of the worst of the Visconti. His father had married his cousin, Bernabò's daughter, and the nervous peculiarities which had long shown themselves in the family amounted almost to madness in his sons. Giovanni's pack of wolf-hounds that were fed on human flesh soon became a legend. That criminals were torn to pieces by them to the delight of their master is beyond question, but we may doubt whether the Duke and their keeper, the monster Squarcia, went out with them at night to hunt down stray passers-by. Passions were of a violence that it is difficult for us to comprehend at that time, when the

almost bestial cruelty and brutality of the Middle Ages had not yet been tempered by the growing refinement of the dawning Renaissance. An exile or a victim is often recorded to have fleshed his teeth in the dead body of an enemy. Corio even tells us of human flesh exposed for sale in butchers' shops.

Facino Cane, the chief of Giangaleazzo's captains, was one of those who, at his master's death, attempted to found an independent tyranny. He all but reduced Pavia to submission, where young Filippo Maria was virtually his prisoner, but he was seized with mortal sickness while besieging Brescia. Meanwhile, with the support of Carlo Malatesta, whose daughter he had married, Giovanni Maria was strongly established at Milan, and, in case of Facino's death, there would be none left to oppose or control him. Such a prospect was more than a number of his subjects cared to face. A conspiracy was rapidly hatched and on May 16th, 1412, a group of nobles murdered him in the church of S. Gottardo in Milan. On the same day Facino Cane, who had been brought to Pavia, died there in the castle. Giovanni Maria's murderers were put to death with tortures horrible enough to have satisfied their victim. A prostitute who covered the body of the dead Duke with roses as it lay in state in the cathedral was handsomely rewarded by his brother.

He was succeeded by Filippo Maria, the last of the Visconti to rule in Milan. If in some ways he recalls Giangaleazzo, it is clear that he inherited to the full the diseased strain of the family, the blood of which ran in his veins on both sides. He was ugly, becoming appallingly fat in later life, and so sensitive about his appearance that he refused to have his portrait painted and never appeared in public, if he could help it. When the Emperor Sigismund came to Milan in 1432, he was splendidly entertained there, but his host could not be induced to visit his capital or to meet him. He

hardly ever left the great Castello di Porta Giovia, built in the red brick of Milan, with its ample grounds and parks beyond the walls. A bad sleeper, he was afraid of the dark and kept a succession of guards in his bedroom, which he would often change several times in the night. So afraid was he of thunder that he had a room specially built with double walls where he could take refuge during a storm. Like all his house he was very superstitious and a firm believer in astrology. But he was also able and well-educated and work on the Duomo and the Certosa went on rapidly during his reign. He was fond of animals and took genuine interest in his pets.

To no one can the death of Facino Cane have brought greater relief than to Filippo Maria, a relief which must have outweighed the terror caused by the murder of his brother. His experiences during the early days of his rule made an indelible impression on him. Adept though he was at all the tricks and subterfuges of the diplomacy of the day, he was too much afraid of his generals to use their abilities to the full. He was forever spying upon them, playing off one against the other, even plotting against them. Indeed, his fear of their power was such that he rarely allowed them to win a complete victory.

Though Facino Cane was dead, his formidable army was still very much in being and, as was usual on the loss of a distinguished and popular leader, quite helpless without him. On the advice, it is said, of the Archbishop of Milan, Filippo Maria decided to marry the condottiere's widow, Beatrice da Tenda, who was twice his age, as the best way of making sure of his men. She also brought him the towns that had been occupied by her husband and a sum of 400,000 florins in cash. Filippo Maria was thus able to set about the task of recovering his Duchy, an object which he pursued with a determination and an ability worthy of the best traditions of the Visconti. He

appointed Francesco Bussone, called Carmagnola from his birthplace, to be his commander-in-chief. It is said that Facino Cane had suggested him as his successor in the last interview, though Carmagnola was then in quite a subordinate position.

Filippo Maria had none of the cruelty, amounting almost to madness, of his brother or of his uncle ; but it was not long before he rid himself of his wife. In 1415, on the word of her waiting-women, Beatrice da Tenda was accused of adultery with one of her pages. She was fond of music and the young man was a good lute-player. The women said they had found him sitting by her on her bed. She did not confess till she had been cruelly tortured and then protested her innocence to the end. The page declared himself guilty from the first and she bitterly reproached him for persisting in his admissions. They were both executed with the maids. Beatrice became something of a heroine to the Romantics, but such incidents were so common during the Renaissance that it would be unfair to judge Filippo Maria harshly. He probably believed her guilty. Bandello, with his chivalrous devotion to the fair sex, protests against this barbarous treatment of women, and asks what vengeance, if the tables were turned, they might not take upon their men-folk for their endless infidelities. But, he adds, with their gentle natures and dislike of cruelty or bloodshed, man might hope to get off more easily.¹

The Duke had no desire to re-marry. Like other rulers of the day he was deeply attached to his *donna di coscienza*, Agnese del Maino, who was the mother of his only child, Bianca Maria. When, as a matter of policy, he married Maria of Savoy, he would have nothing to do with her. It was said that at their first meeting a dog howled so horribly that he was frightened at the evil omen. But she was carefully watched, only women being allowed access to her

¹ *Introduction to Novello*, 26.

and all her doings were reported to him. Everyone else about him was similarly treated.

Thanks to the energy, astuteness and resource of Carmagnola, to his skill in intrigue, in which he was a rival of his master, and his brilliant gifts as a soldier, not only did Filippo Maria recover in ten years the whole of the Duchy as Giangaleazzo had left it, but he also controlled Genoa. The Duke now began to fear his powerful general, who had been allowed to marry a Visconti and was preparing to set up a splendid establishment in his palace, the Broletto, given him by Filippo Maria, in Milan. He virtually cashiered him as a soldier when he appointed him to the lucrative post of Governor of Genoa. Carmagnola appears to have acquiesced when the command against Naples was not given to him, but he grew restive, even alarmed, when Filippo Maria engaged Francesco Sforza, the one general, young though he was, whose reputation might rival his own. In any case there is no doubt that Carmagnola was intriguing to acquire an independent town or state. On being removed from the governorship of Genoa he went to Milan to protest. Filippo Maria was never easy of access. When the visitor had at last obtained an audience he must be careful not to approach a window for fear that he might signal to someone outside. He refused to see Carmagnola, who, furious at the refusal, rode straight off to the Venetians, the Duke's most formidable enemies. They welcomed him with open arms.

In the service of Visconti was also Piccinino, and it became clear that the rivalry between the two factions of the Sforzeschi and the Bracceschi was to continue in the younger generation. Like Braccio, the famous dwarf commander was born at Perugia, the son of a butcher. Reading, writing, and simple arithmetic made up the sum of his education, a larger share of book-learning than fell to the lot of most of his peers.

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He became a weaver, but the spirit of adventure, fortified by a dream of Mars or St. George, resulted in his joining an uncle who was in the service of Bartolomeo da Sesta in the Romagna, as page. He quickly obtained not only his rank as man-at-arms, but the daughter of his commander in marriage, with a dowry of three horses. Suspecting his wife of adultery, he put her to death after her child was born, but adopted the boy, who was also to win fame as a condottiere. However, he thought it as well to change captains and was soon fighting under Braccio himself. His courage and ability amply made up for his diminutive stature and poor health. Quite early Braccio crowned him with his own hands when he defeated two adversaries in the lists. Braccio's victory at Perugia was largely due to him and he eventually married a daughter of that condottiere.

The rivalry between Sforza and Piccinino was fatal to the Milanese. They were incapable of working together and the placing of Carlo Malatesta over them only made matters worse. Simonetta describes Malatesta as quite unable to control his men, better fitted for peace than war. They were jointly responsible for the crushing defeat inflicted on the Milanese by Carmagnola and his Venetians at Maclodio in 1427, when it was said that he might have taken Milan ; but, to the not unnatural indignation of Venice, he neutralized his victory by releasing his 10,000 prisoners at once. Sforza now learnt what it meant to serve the suspicious Visconti. He was imprisoned in the castle of Mortara, near Pavia, on a charge of treachery. But Filippo Maria could not do without him. Ostensibly he dismissed him from his service, but only after he had arranged that he should go to Lucca in order to save it from falling into the hands of Florence. So successful was he that the people of Lucca offered to make him their lord, but he preferred to accept a

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handsome present from Florence, purporting to be the pay still owing to his father, as an inducement to withdraw from the struggle.

Sforza retired to Cotignola, of which he was now count. Here his services were sought both by Milan and by Florence. The Florentines were alarmed at the success of Piccinino, who had followed him in command at Lucca. They offered the higher pay, but Filippo Maria offered to adopt him as his heir and give him the hand of his bastard daughter, Bianca Maria. In spite of his late experience ambition won the day. Carmagnola's conduct in the campaign that followed, in which he was heavily defeated by Sforza, was such that he was summoned to Venice on the pretext of discussing future plans, and accused of treachery. He was found guilty and executed between the columns on the Piazzetta, gagged, but dressed in magnificent scarlet. If his behaviour was not due to bad health, the Venetians had every justification for treating him as they did.

The war ended when the Emperor Sigismund came to Italy in 1432 and went to Milan to receive the iron crown. During his visit the Duke betrothed his eight year old daughter to Francesco Sforza with all ceremony. Sforza now had good reason to believe his future was secure, even with Filippo Maria Visconti. Henceforth his career was closely bound up with Milan. He was already in possession of Cremona, the most important town promised as part of the dowry of his bride. But the Duke dreaded him the more for having been strong enough to force his hand. However, the new Pope, Eugenius IV, was a Venetian and Filippo Maria thought that Sforza might be useful against him. His behaviour is characteristic. He bade the messenger sent to summon Sforza to his presence kill him should he hesitate, but come with him if he showed no suspicion. Sforza started at once, without even an escort, in spite of the warnings

of his friends. Completely reassured, the Duke welcomed him with the utmost cordiality.

Ostensibly Sforza was sent on leave to look after his interests in Naples, but as soon as he entered Papal territory in the March of Ancona he showed his hand, appearing openly as the enemy of the Pope. From this time begins his attempt to build up a state in these turbulent, treacherous regions, where it was as easy for an able general to win towns as it was later to lose them. At the moment the inhabitants were only too glad to throw open their gates to a condottiere of such fame in order to escape from the clutches of the war-like Papal Vicar, Cardinal Vitelleschi, who was attempting to dragoon them into obedience. By the end of the year Sforza had a nice little bunch of these towns, strongly walled and perched upon their commanding hills, with their wonderful views across the Adriatic, in his hands—Ascoli, Osimo, and Vitelleschi's own see of Recanati among them. The defeated cardinal announced his intention of preparing Loreto for the reception of the conqueror, and thoroughly he did his work, for he carried off all the treasures from the rich shrine of the Virgin there to Rome. Fermo became Sforza's capital, and he headed letters, "From our Castle of Fermo, in despite of Peter and Paul"—a touch of dry humour rare with him.

The first year or two of Sforza's rule in the Marches was marked by some appalling crimes and massacres. The smaller the lordships, the more bitter were the feuds, and nowhere in Italy were they worse than in Romagna. These massacres often took place in church, where it was most easy to attack the victims who were off their guard and, as a rule, defenceless. In 1434 the people of Camerino rose against the ruling family, the Varani, murdering every male member in the church of S. Domenico. One boy only, Giulio Cesare, was saved by an aunt, who hid him in a

bundle of hay and fled with him to the Trinci, the lords of Foligno. The Trinci themselves could stage a massacre as well as anybody. On one occasion the head of the house murdered a whole family, three hundred in all, loaded their mangled remains on thirty-six donkeys and drove them round Foligno.

Owing to trouble there the aunt took her charge to Fabriano, which was ruled by the Chiavelli, who had been friendly with Sforza. But when they threw in their lot with the Papacy he encouraged a conspiracy against them. On Ascension Day, 1435, they attended Mass and seventeen of the conspirators seated themselves as near them as possible. The attack should have begun when the Mass started, but no one moved. Then at the words, "Et incarnatus est de Spirito Sancto", one of them drew his sword, exclaiming, "Death to the tyrants." Old Tomaso, the head of the House, aged eighty, was attacked first, but he put up a good fight for his life. Two others were killed in the sacristy. Three boys took refuge at the altar, where the priests protected them and afterwards placed them in a monastery. There they were found a few days later, dragged out into the market square and made to take poison. Four more children were strangled and an infant of eight months was taken from its cradle, where it was sleeping peacefully, and its brains dashed out against the wall. The mob, siding with the conspirators, joined in sacking the houses of the Chiavelli. The town then gave itself up to Sforza, who welcomed the change. One of the Chiavelli was fighting under him.

The little Giulio Cesare Varano was placed in a monastery. He lived to return to Camerino, for at bottom the people recognized the rights of their petty tyrants, gladly though they often rose against them, and there was always a party ready to support them. He was killed by Cesare Borgia after he had captured the town. All the Pope could do was to recognize

Sforza's conquests, as his predecessors had often been compelled to do, and make him Papal Vicar. He thus became Marquis of Fermo and Gonfalonier of the Church. The last thing the Duke of Milan desired was that Sforza should build up a state for himself instead of conquering the towns for him. Highly indignant, he sent Piccinino to deal with him and the Pope, who was compelled to take refuge in Tuscany.

Florence and Venice now offered Francesco the command of their forces against Milan. He hesitated, for he was unwilling to break openly with Visconti, but finally he consented. In 1435 he went to Florence to consult with Eugenius. The visit had important results for Sforza, for he made the acquaintance of Cosimo dei Medici, who at once conceived a warm liking and respect for him. The two men struck up a firm friendship. Cosimo supported Sforza and financed him in all his enterprises, while Sforza asked his friend's advice at more than one crisis in his career. An interesting memento of the friendship was the house which Francesco, in accordance with a custom of the times, later presented to Cosimo in Milan. He converted it into the Medici bank, which became one of the most notable buildings there, for Cosimo grudged no expense upon it. Unfortunately the financial straits of his grandson, Lorenzo, obliged him to sell it in 1484 "with tears in his eyes".

Sforza's success in the March of Ancona was a deep humiliation to Eugenius, who cordially hated his Gonfalonier. Hence he readily countenanced an attempt to murder him. Warned by a cardinal, Sforza was on his guard. On hearing the news his men, in their fury, made an attack on some Papal troops and captured the ring-leader. Though he confessed under torture, Sforza with the magnanimity that rarely deserted him, merely imprisoned him in the castle of Fermo. Here he wrote a letter warning Sforza that there was no man living whom the

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Pope hated more than himself and imploring him not to trust him. Piccinino appears to have been privy to the plot, but Sforza would have nothing to do with a proposal to murder his rival, driving the two would-be assassins from his presence with furious threats. Piccinino, to do him justice, ever afterwards spoke up for Sforza whenever he was attacked, even to the Duke of Milan.

The kaleidoscope of Italian politics now begins to move with bewildering rapidity. So alarmed were the Venetians at the vigour with which Piccinino was pressing them that they begged Florence, in the interest of the common cause, to send Sforza to their aid. The Florentines agreed, but, to the annoyance of Venice, Sforza refused to cross the Po and attack the Milanese. Filippo Maria was much gratified. Characteristically he seized the chance of dividing his enemies by making a separate peace with Florence and the Pope. Once more he promised Sforza Bianca Maria and undertook to support him in his expedition to Naples. Once again Sforza trusted the wily Visconti and great preparations for the wedding were made in the towns of his dominions, which set about raising money for gifts. The event was to take place at Fermo, and Alessandro Sforza wrote from Macerata, bidding his agent collect everything needed—hay, litter, good beds, meat, chickens, sheets, horse-trappings, cooks, game, fish, smart tidily-dressed lads to wait, horses, baggage-animals, hams, kids, lambs, sheep, eggs, cheese, salt hams—truly a comprehensive requisitioning. But Sforza quickly discovered that Visconti had no intention of throwing away a pawn so valuable as his daughter, though he was ready to use her to hold him in play as long as possible.

Nor had he any intention of helping him in Naples. At one time he too had favoured the cause of Anjou, but now an incident occurred which made a profound impression upon the men of the Renaissance and

contributed not a little to win Don Alfonso of Aragon the reputation for wisdom he richly deserved. The Visconti sent the Genoese fleet to support René d'Anjou. It met the navy of Aragon off Gaeta. Superior in strength, the Aragonese were confident of victory, but the Genoese, born sea-men, were on their own element. Though the struggle was long and fierce, the victory was so complete that only one of the ships of Aragon escaped. Among the prisoners were Don Alfonso himself, the King of Navarre and a host of great nobles. Visconti had them all sent direct to Milan, much to the disappointment of the Genoese. He received them more as guests than as prisoners. It is not improbable that, with his innate dread of seeing anyone win a complete victory, he was already preparing to desert Anjou. But it was generally believed that a remarkable speech made by Don Alfonso, who was an enthusiastic student of the classics and patron of Humanists, turned the tide. He pointed out all that René's success might mean to Milan. René would inevitably try to obtain a foothold in Lombardy as a link between France and his Southern Kingdom. And he duly emphasized the undying gratitude that Filippo Maria would earn for himself—a very questionable asset at any time, and never more doubtful than in Quattrocento Italy—by treating him generously. Whether affected by Alfonso's eloquence or not, Visconti not only set him free, but supplied him with means for the conquest of Naples.

Once again Visconti began to move against the Pope in his usual indirect way. Piccinino appeared in the Romagna, where he induced a number of towns to revolt from Papal rule, giving out that he was disgusted at his treatment by the Duke and wished to found an independent state. Then, his object accomplished, he published an indignant manifesto to the effect that the Pope was slandering him by seeking to brand him as a traitor to his beloved master, and placed

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the towns in Visconti's hands. The trick, characteristic of the twisty diplomacy of the day, shows how admirably Piccinino was suited to serve Filippo Maria. The Pope and the Florentines sent for Sforza, who no longer hesitated to take arms against his father-in-law elect. To 1439-40 belongs the duel in the ever-troubled Bergamo-Brescia border region between the two great condottieri, one of the most interesting in the annals of this type of warfare. It is admirably described in detail by Ricotti in his *Storia delle Compagnie di Ventura in Italia*.

Sforza commanded the Venetians, Piccinino the Milanese. The struggle began with Sforza's determined efforts to raise the siege of Brescia. These were so successful that Piccinino judged that the only way to checkmate them was to march on Verona and try to surprise it. Acting with characteristic promptness and helped by information from a deserter, he was in possession of the town before it was known that he had left his camp. Sforza was not to be outdone. Though it was late in November, he persuaded his men to follow him. He started at night from the neighbourhood of the North shore of Lake Garda and made his way over the mountains through the deep snow. Many of the men-at-arms lost fingers or toes or other limbs from frostbite and the climb down by the Chiuse above Verona was a hazardous feat for men-at-arms with their heavy armour. They reached Verona three days after Piccinino had seized it; the castle still held out for Venice. Attacking the Milanese forces as they found them in the streets, they utterly defeated them, driving them over the bridge, which broke down under the weight, and taking two thousand prisoners. But Brescia was still besieged.

Piccinino next appeared in Umbria and attempted to imitate Braccio by seizing Perugia, but his native town "preferred to honour him as a countryman rather than hate him as a prince" and sent him off with a

handsome present. Shortly afterwards he was heavily defeated by Michele Attendolo after a hard fight, but as the 2,000 prisoners were at once set free, after being relieved of their armour and horses, in accordance with custom, he was able to start for Lombardy a few days later to attack Sforza, very little the worse for his losses. Back in the Milanese, he quickly refitted his men, raising funds and supplies by wholesale plundering. He then made his way again to the Brescia region. Here he did remarkably well (1441) in spite of inferior numbers, for Sforza now controlled all the might of Venice. In the end he succeeded in reducing Sforza to a desperate state. He was besieging Martinengo, but Piccinino seized the passes round and cut off supplies completely. In fact, he had Sforza in his power.

Yet at the crucial moment Piccinino failed, as Braccio and the Bracceschi so often did, from a lack of the sound judgment of the Sforzas. Like most of his brother condottieri, Piccinino dreamed of possessing a town of his own, as the only safe refuge for his declining years. So little did he understand Visconti, that he chose this moment, when he held the whole army of Venice in the hollow of his hand, for pointing out to him that, after his long years of service, he did not possess enough ground for a grave, and suggesting that he might give him the important town of Piacenza. It was a trifling reward for his long services, he added, and victory or defeat might depend upon its being granted. Three other condottieri in the Duke's service sent in similar demands, couched in much the same terms.

Visconti at once took alarm and brought into play his favourite bear policy. He preferred defeat to letting one of his generals think himself powerful enough to dictate terms to him. He sent off a special messenger post-haste to Sforza, asking him to name his own terms and offering him all the towns won by

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Piccinino in addition to Cremona, as well as his daughter, Bianca Maria. She was now sixteen, her promised bridegroom being forty. The messenger then went on to Piccinino, bidding him cease hostilities at once. Bitterly ruing his mistake, he protested, but was obliged to submit. The Venetians were naturally delighted at the prospect of peace.

CHAPTER III

FRANCESCO SFORZA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR MILAN

ONCE again Sforza rose to the bait and this time at least he advanced a step nearer the goal which he kept steadily in view. Filippo Maria dared no longer withhold the promised bride. Bianca Maria came to Cremona with her mother. The marriage took place in the church of S. Sigismondo, a little outside the town. Three chosen troops of Sforza's men, among them being all the leaders of his command, formed the escort. The pair then made their entry into Cremona amid great rejoicings. The little city was gaily decorated and there were a series of banquets and other entertainments, including sports for the troops, so that, as Simonetta puts it, the very walls of the town seemed to breathe delight. Not till 1540 was the altar-piece by Giulio Campi of Cremona, depicting the pair being presented to the Virgin by S. Sigismund, placed in position. Pontremoli was the other town that Bianca Maria brought her husband. Like Cremona, it was an important frontier town, which would be best in the hands of a soldier.

Cremona always had a special place in the heart of Bianca Maria, as had she in the hearts of its citizens. And she had reason to be fond of it, for the marriage proved happy. Sforza owed much to his wife, as he readily admitted, saying that he had many things for which to thank God, but the greatest blessing bestowed upon him was a peerless wife. Long a pawn in her father's political game, she had been promised to two other suitors, but she is said to have declared that she wanted none but Sforza. Her influence in Milan was

of the utmost value to her husband. Moreover, she was in every way fitted to be a soldier's wife. She had none of the Visconti nervous peculiarities; indeed, though every inch a woman, she was a redoubtable *virago*. Adored by the troops, she was never so happy as when among them; but, fearful of gossip, she kept away from the camp except upon important occasions. Once she arrived when her husband was carrying on a siege which he had thoughts of abandoning owing to the drenching rain. She herself placed two fresh cannon in position, giving orders that they should not cease fire day or night, with the result that the walls of the city were quickly battered into the moat and the inhabitants gladly capitulated. At a later date, after Francesco became Duke of Milan, the castle of Monza was seized by some rebels. Bianca Maria declined to send for her husband from Brescia, where he was fighting, but, bidding all loyal citizens follow her, she marched thither at the head of the men on foot. Such was the effect of her presence that Monza thought it wise to surrender immediately.

Francesco himself had to face Amazons in battle. At the siege of Vigevano, which was captured only after a desperate struggle, a regular corps of women fought as valiantly as the men. When he visited the town in later days, it is said that the old condottiere used to like to make them parade before him in full armour, led by their commander, Camilla Rodolfi.

Her husband consulted Bianca Maria continually, especially after he became Duke of Milan, where she was loved by the inhabitants as their own duchess in a way that Sforza could not hope to be. She did her best to use her influence for good and the stories of her charities and good deeds are endless. She practised what were then considered to be the virtues of a devout Christian. She often mortified the flesh, going barefoot to church at night, and she disliked

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people kneeling or even uncovering to her in the streets. When reproved for her lavish charities, she replied, "raising her beautiful white hands with their precious rings", that it was better to spend than to hoard and forget God.

Tall and of a majestic carriage, she had, says the chronicler, a complexion as fair as her character or her name. She dressed splendidly, but with such taste and dignity that she was admired by great and small alike. As one would expect, she was violent-tempered, but her rages were soon over, though they sometimes left sad havoc in their wake. Her husband was a man of his day. His affections sometimes wandered. He was the father of twenty-two bastards, most of them born before his marriage, who often proved valuable assets in his political dealings. Such lapses at that time rarely even ruffled the surface of married life. They were taken for granted in a man in an exalted station. On one occasion, however, a maid of honour of Bianca Maria, a good and virtuous girl called Perpetua, caught Francesco's eye and it proved necessary to find her a husband as soon as possible. On the very day of the marriage she was carried off to a remote castle and never heard of again. It was persistently rumoured that she had been made away with by the commands of her mistress. Her son, Polidoro Sforza, was brought up with the rest of the family.

There are many incidents to prove the depth of Bianca Maria's affection, her passionate grief at Sforza's death, for one, when she warned other women that, if only they knew how bitterly she regretted ever having been troublesome to her husband, they would never be anything but amiable to their own. According to Simonetta she was referring to her objections to Sforza's relations with other women, "as is the habit of men and especially of princes". Francesco was careful of her health, imploring her not to tire herself

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by travelling in the heat and the dust on more than one occasion, for his sake if not for her own.

The fact that Sforza was now his son-in-law seemed to increase Filippo Maria's fear, hatred and jealousy of him. In violation of all his principles he had been forced by circumstances to raise the foremost general in Italy to the position of a dangerous rival with a valid claim to the succession to his duchy. Illegitimacy counted for little in Italy at that time, especially when there was no legal heir. Bianca Maria was Visconti's only child by the one woman whom he had ever loved and who had the rank of a brevet-wife in the eyes of the world.

An even more bitter enemy of Sforza was Pope Eugenius IV, who hated him, quite naturally, for the towns he had seized in Papal territory, and possibly even more because he had been found out in attempting to murder him. In his eagerness to recover from Sforza his lost towns and compass his ruin he was ready to desert René d'Anjou and recognize Don Alfonso as King of Naples. Sforza now learnt that Piccinino had been made Gonfalonier of the Church in place of himself and was leading the combined forces of the Pope and his own father-in-law against him; for Alfonso had insisted that Sforza must be kept too busy to be able to move South. Filippo Maria showed himself, as always, a loyal supporter of Alfonso, partly because he was too far away to be dangerous and also because his support was essential to his purpose of weakening his son-in-law.

Sforza's principal ally at this time was Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, to whom he had married his natural daughter, Polissena, just before his own wedding. He went to visit him immediately on leaving Cremona with his bride.

Sigismondo Malatesta is one of the most curious and interesting men of the early Renaissance; indeed, in the strange contrasts of his character and in his many-sided

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gifts he may be said to embody it in its most violent form. If in the brutal, almost bestial savagery of his passions he deserves to be placed with the worst of his brother tyrants of the Romagna, as a condottiere he ranks with all but the best soldiers of the Quattrocento. As Humanist and patron of art he stands beside Nicholas V or Pius II, Cosimo dei Medici or Alfonso of Aragon, while as poet and lover he has a little niche of his own. Like most of the men of mark and even the rulers of the day, he was a bastard, a natural son of Pandolfo, Lord of Rimini. His precocity was extraordinary. At the age of thirteen he saved Rimini, himself leading his men to victory, while his unwarlike uncle was offering up prayers in church. At fifteen he defeated that experienced condottiere, Federico Montefeltro of Urbino, in the field.

Tall, powerful and wiry, with the small shifty eyes and the flat lids that gave a curious snake-like expression to his handsome, sensual, dangerous-tempered face, he became a by-word for treachery and ferocity, even in the Quattrocento. You see him incarnated in the evil vigour of the vicious little Malatesta elephant as it appears in the church of S. Francesco di Rimini. He is a combination of the fox and the tiger rather than the fox and the wolf, which Machiavelli considered essential for a successful tyrant. In early youth he was betrothed to the daughter of Carmagnola, who gave him a magnificent suit of armour and part of the dowry in advance. When he met his death Sigismondo refused to marry the daughter of a criminal, but he omitted to return the dowry. This was the first of a series of similar frauds, for Sigismondo was never known to let money out of his hands, though he was lavish in giving and fond of display, like most rulers of his age. In 1437 he married a daughter of the Marquis of Ferrara. She died three years later, and Sigismondo was accused of

poisoning her ; the charge was never proved and the Marquis continued to be his friend, but it is not improbable that he was guilty.

By this time Sigismondo's relations with Isotta degli Atti, the woman who was to dominate his life in a way that was then almost unique, had begun. Isotta is the goddess of the Malatesta temple at Rimini—the Diva Isotta, as she is called there. This church, though dedicated to S. Francesco, is the most pagan church of the Renaissance ; indeed, its pagan character was one of the chief charges brought against Sigismondo at his trial in Rome by Pius II ; but it is a speaking record of its founder and the tomb of Isotta, resting on the Malatesta elephants, is the most striking memorial in it. There is no monument to his two other wives. The joint monogram of Isotta and himself, IS, which Sigismondo adopted as the device for his troops, is continually meeting the eye. And it was Isotta who made him a by no means negligible poet, as the rhymes he addressed to her show, just as it was she who inspired the *Isottei*, a collection of poems by the leading Humanists at the court of Rimini. Yet, in spite of her repeated requests, it was not till 1456 that he married her, six years after the death of Polissena.

The testimony to Isotta's merits is unanimous. Pius II says that Sigismondo loved her desperately and that she deserved his devotion, while her culture and accomplishments, even her looks, are no less universally praised. The medals do not show her as strikingly beautiful : handsome, rather, with a kindly expression. In spite of her position, she had the qualities of the wife, even of the mother, the woman who understood Sigismondo and knew how to manage him, rather than of the mistress. As Yriarte puts it, she was an Egeria rather than a Delilah. It was to her brains, tact and devotion that she owed her influence. She could enter into his plans and share



SIGISMONDO MALATESTA
Medallion by Leon Battista Alberti

[Alinari Photo]

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his love of good literature or great art, just as she could soothe or comfort him when he was roused or in difficulties. Her diplomatic skill was considerable and she used it for her lord, just as she sacrificed all she possessed for him when his fortunes had sunk to their lowest ebb. It is to his credit that he could appreciate and be grateful for Isotta's devotion.

Carried away by his ungovernable passions, Sigismondo no more pretended to be faithful to Isotta than would any other prince of his day. In 1448 he conceived a passion for the young wife of a German count. When she refused to have anything to do with him, he attacked her and her escort one night as she was passing through Fano with such vigour that she herself was killed in the affray, whereupon, according to some accounts, he violated her corpse while still warm. Once, when roused, he drew his sword at a conference of rulers, and later in life he went to Rome with the deliberate intention of killing Pope Paul II, because he suggested that he should exchange Rimini for other towns.

Though a stern disciplinarian, he was liked by his men, because he would share their worst hardships and could rival the best of them in strength and endurance. He was also a good engineer. His love of art and learning was genuine and his knowledge far from inconsiderable, as Pius II admitted, and also the scholars whom he patronized. Culture had long been a feature of the old established courts in the Romagna. The Malatesta had welcomed Petrarch at Pesaro, as the Polenta had given Dante a home at Ravenna. Hearing that a Humanist of some note, Antonio Campanio, was passing through Rimini, on his way to present his *Life of Braccio* to the condottiere's son, Sigismondo sent for him to his palace, lavished every kindness upon him and had him escorted on his way as much impressed by his host's knowledge of philosophy as by his generosity. Just

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as he must have the best artists at Rimini, Pisanello or Leon Battista Alberti, to make the beautiful medals of Isotta and himself, or build the *tempietto malatestiano*, the most striking and speaking relic he has left, so in Rome the great Humanist Poggio was his inseparable companion. From Greece, where he was commanding the forces of Venice against the Turks—whom he was quite ready to call in on occasion to help him against his Christian enemies—he brought the remains of the scholar Gemistus Plethon to Rimini for burial in S. Francesco, where he liked to bury the artists or men of letters who died at his court. He appears to have enjoyed presiding over the debates of these spoilt, jealous, carping Humanists. Some were given houses, others commissions in his army; if their swords were as sharp as their pens or their tongues they must have proved useful soldiers.

The advance of his enemies gave the signal for a general revolt in Sforza's little state. These towns of the Marches were always ready for a change of masters and Sforza's hand had often been heavy in the matter of taxation. He was particularly indignant at the defection of two of his captains, Troilo Orsini and Pietro Brunoro, who betrayed Jesi and Fabriano. Brunoro became the hero of a romantic story. Sforza induced his brother to despatch forged letters, so couched that they made Alfonso of Aragon believe that the pair had been guilty of a double treachery. The letters were duly seized and the two revolting condottieri flung into a dungeon in Aragon. Here they might have ended their lives, but for the efforts of Bona, the mistress of Brunoro, a sturdy mountain girl from the Valtelline, who had served with him dressed as a man. Failing to move Don Alfonso to release her lover, she appealed to the Kings of France and England and to every man of position she could reach in Europe. After ten years of unremitting effort, Alfonso relented. She and Brunoro were

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married : they took service with Venice and fought courageously in defending Negropont against the Turks till Brunoro was killed, and Bona, like one of Ariosto's heroines, died of grief.

But Alfonso and the Pope were getting too powerful for the comfort of Filippo Maria, who once again abandoned the League and threw his weight into the scale of his son-in-law. In pursuance of this plan he first induced the Pope to send Piccinino to Milan. The condottiere left his men unwillingly, with tears in his eyes, passing along the lines amid cries of Braccio ! Braccio ! Chiesa ! Chiesa ! Francesco Piccinino was left in command with strict orders from his father not to fight. Sforza promptly seized the opportunity of attacking, and Piccinino in Milan learnt that his son, Francesco, was a prisoner, with the Papal Legate, who had been well thrashed by the Sforzeschi, and his army utterly routed. His other son, Jacopo, had managed to escape. Piccinino's health was never good. He had often been wounded, was lame, and half paralysed, could hardly sit his horse and had to lean on the arms of others when he walked. The shock proved too much for him and he died in a few days. The great Bracceschi were always heroes of the crowd, for they had the romantic touch that was lacking in their more successful rivals, and the grief in Milan was as genuine as it was demonstrative at the splendid funeral.

In 1444 Bianca Maria bore her husband a son at Fermo. Pope Eugenius referred to the event as the birth of a second Lucifer. The Duke of Milan was consulted about the name and suggested that the boy should be called Galeazzo. Sforza now added the Visconti viper to his arms. But the good understanding did not last long. Filippo Maria wanted a condottiere to succeed Piccinino and opened negotiations with Sarpellone, who was serving under Sforza. Sforza was informed of the negotiations, which were perfectly legal, though Sarpellone kept him in the

dark, merely asking leave to go to Milan. Sforza hesitated, then had him arrested and tortured till he confessed far more than the truth and executed. This high-handed action was universally condemned, even by Sforza's friends. Filippo Maria was furious, writing to his son-in-law that he would never forgive him, that he would drive him from the Marches, of which he had obtained unworthy possession thanks to his wife: for the innocent blood of Sarpellone cried for vengeance.

By the death of Piccinino Sforza had gained the friendship of Federico Montefeltro of Urbino, who had become attracted to him much as Cosimo dei Medici had been, but had hitherto remained faithful to his old friend, Piccinino. The friendship resulted in a romance, recorded by the Humanist Filelfo, which momentarily brought disastrous consequences upon Sforza. If in Bona we have the *virago*, we are now introduced to the learned lady of the Renaissance, who was to become a more common phenomenon as time went on. Like her cousin Giulio Cesare, Costanza Varano had escaped the massacre at Camerino and been brought up at Pesaro in the cultivated surroundings of the court of her grandfather, where she showed great precocity. In 1442, at the age of fourteen, she had delivered a remarkable oration, which had, of course, been prepared for her, on behalf of her exiled relatives, before Francesco and Bianca Maria. Francesco's brother, Alessandro, had heard it and fallen desperately in love with her beauty, eloquence and learning on the spot. She repeated the performance in Latin in 1444 before Don Alfonso of Aragon when he camped near Pesaro, besides writing Filippo Maria a letter which impressed him so much that he wrote her a courteous answer.

Federico d'Urbino had seen what had happened and taxed Alessandro with his passion, observing that he blushed at the mention of the lady's name.

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"What would you say, if you could have her for your wife?"

"I would give her my life."

And this in Quattrocento Italy and Filelfo for our authority. But Federico said that her mother would never consent to the match unless Alessandro had a state of his own. However, he promised to arrange matters. Galeazzo Malatesta would sell Pesaro and Francesco would supply the money. The upshot was that Alessandro and his bride entered Pesaro in triumph in 1445. In later years Alessandro was able to lead a life of something like learned leisure. He delighted to talk with scholars and priests. He governed Pesaro admirably and collected a good library, though his accomplished wife did not live to enjoy it.

Sigismondo Malatesta had long been trying to get Pesaro into his hands, and he turned upon Sforza with all the venomous hatred of which he was capable. In the previous year Sforza had sent him to receive the large sum of money due to him from Venice. Sigismondo had kept it for himself on the ground that it was owing him as arrears of pay, distributing what remained among the people of Fano. In 1449 he strangled his wife Polissena, Francesco's daughter. This has been doubted, but it is now placed beyond question by a letter from Sforza to Pope Pius II.¹ In 1462 Sforza urged the Pope not to proceed to extremes against Malatesta in the interests of Italy as a whole, pointing out that he himself had no reason to love him. "The said Signor Don Sigismondo had my daughter, his wife, strangled by Count Antonio [his chancellor] with a napkin through no fault of hers." He then sent for a friar and bade him swear that she had confessed to him that she had been guilty of adultery. When he refused, he was thrown

¹ See *Arch. Stor. Lomb.* 1913, p. 158, *L'Atteggiamento di Francesco Sforza verso S. Malatesta*, etc.

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into an oubliette. This was true, as Sforza was informed by credible eye-witnesses, "for she was our daughter and of our own flesh and blood", and all out of Sigismondo's *innato odio* for Sforza and also in order to be free to marry Isotta. So says Sforza, but there were rumours that, after the death of Filippo Maria, Malatesta had serious thoughts of marrying his widow, Maria of Savoy, in the hope of checkmating Sforza in his claims on Milan.

The story sheds a lurid light on the times, for Sforza was on occasion in alliance with the murderer of his daughter. It is true that she was only his natural daughter, but she was one of the five children by his favourite mistress, Columbina, whom he had known in his youth in Naples, and, bastard though she was, he had given her the name of his first wife. It is worth recording that Francesco Sforza possessed a fool who bore so striking a resemblance to Sigismondo Malatesta that he had to be kept out of the way when his dangerous son-in-law was in the neighbourhood.

Malatesta did not conceal his feelings, which also embraced Federico Montefeltro of Urbino. He began with an attempt to poison Alessandro Sforza, which failed, and then attacked Urbino, also unsuccessfully. Thanks to Florence, for whom both he and Federico were fighting, peace was made. Then he managed to persuade Alessandro Sforza that his friend, Federico, had designs upon Pesaro. In his indignation, Alessandro wrote to Malatesta suggesting that he should join him in surprising Urbino. Thereupon Malatesta showed the letter to Federico, who, highly indignant at such gratuitous treachery, determined to pay Sforza back in the same coin. He proposed that they should lay siege to Pesaro, always a Naboth's vineyard to Sigismondo, who meant to keep it for himself, regardless of all agreements. On the way, however, Federico became suspicious and asked Malatesta for guarantees. When he refused to give

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any, Federico's suspicions increased and gradually the whole plot was revealed. When he reached Pesaro he entered it as a friend of Sforza and fought by his side in defending it against Malatesta; for Federico was, as Ricotti puts it, "a man who, by his high character, his love of sound learning and his steadiness of purpose deservedly cleanses his century of many blemishes". He had, by the way, served his apprenticeship in arms under the great Sforza.

Francesco's fortunes now reached their lowest ebb. His father-in-law turned all his forces against him, some of his towns in the Marches revolted, while Malatesta was only too delighted to snap up others. Venice declined to declare war on Milan, since Visconti had committed no overt act of war against her and Cosimo dei Medici could only give him advice. Even Alessandro surrendered Pesaro to Malatesta without a struggle. Jesi was the only town in the Marches left to him. The one bright spot was the loyalty of Federico d'Urbino. He it was who made his peace with his brother Alessandro and helped him recover Pesaro. Alessandro went as Sforza's envoy to congratulate Nicholas V on his accession, when he was formally invested with the town.

Filippo Maria, however, over-reached himself in a desire for revenge. He attacked Cremona, Bianca Maria's dower-town. Fearing that it might fall into the hands of the Visconti the Venetians made the attack a *casus belli*. Events moved quickly. Michele Attendolo, now commander-in-chief of the Venetians, utterly defeated the Visconti's army under young Piccinino and advanced rapidly into the Milanese.

In vain Visconti sued for peace: the Venetians were soon ravaging the rich plain round Milan itself. Visconti appealed to the Pope, to Alfonso of Aragon, to Sigismondo Malatesta and even offered to restore Asti to France, but in vain. At last he was compelled to turn to his hated son-in-law, unless he wished to see

his whole life-work ruined. He wrote Sforza a characteristic letter, begging him to come to the aid of his father-in-law, now old and blind and in danger of being crushed in the capital of his own state which belonged of right to the husband of his only daughter and which he proposed to make over to him by deed, reserving to himself only a life interest, which could not now be long. Sforza was to become captain general of the Milanese forces with a liberal salary.

Sforza acted with his usual deliberation. He saw that, if Venice once obtained control of Lombardy, there would be no more hope of Milan for him. Filippo Maria could not live long. Remittances from Florence and Venice were much less regular after the defeat of Visconti. As usual, he turned to Cosimo dei Medici for advice. Cosimo bade him act like any other prince and think only of his own interests. He is said to have proposed that, if Francesco were short of money, he might let his men plunder Pesaro, as the friendship of no free city was worth having; but it is more like Cosimo to give such advice than it would have been like Francesco to act upon it. Francesco still hesitated, but when Venice tried to seize Cremona he threw off the mask. Even then his father-in-law returned to his old tricks. He ordered Sforza to draw off the Venetians by attacking the Veronese and at the same time failed to send him the supplies necessary for raising an army. But when Michele Attendolo not only overran the whole Milanese, but once more defeated Piccinino, Visconti was seized with panic. He sent his most intimate friend and counsellor, Scaramuccia Balbi, imploring Sforza to come unconditionally. Sforza raised money by selling his last town, Jesi, to the new Pope, much to the disappointment of the inhabitants. Hoping to pave the way to a reconciliation, he sent on his children, but Visconti allowed them to go right through his

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Duchy by slow stages without noticing their presence. However, he pushed on with such forces as he could raise to Cotignola, where he halted. Here the Marquis Ferrara sent him news of the death of his father-in-law on August 15th, 1447.

When asked on his death bed what were his views about the succession, Visconti is said to have replied that, after his death, he hoped that everything would go to rack and ruin—"après moi le déluge". The answer obviously reflects the real feelings of the unhappy Duke, but he was said to have left a will making Alfonso of Aragon his heir: this also he may well have done, to spite his son-in-law. The question looked like resolving itself into another struggle between the Sforzeschi and the Bracceschi, who, led by the Piccinino brothers, supported Aragon and introduced Alfonso's men into the castle of Milan. But there was a powerful party that dreamt of reviving the Ambrosian Republic, not realizing that the great days of the struggle of the communes with the Empire were gone for ever. This party gained the day and the troops of Aragon were easily bought off with the treasure left by the late Duke in the castle. The first act of the new government was to destroy the castle as the emblem of tyranny.

But Venice was threatening and a general must be found capable of imposing his will upon the lesser condottieri. Sforza was the one man possible and, after some not unnatural hesitation, Scaramuccia was once again despatched to offer him the command of the forces of Milan. It was a bitter disappointment for Sforza to be asked to serve the Republic on the terms offered him by the Visconti with no hope of the succession, to lose the prize just when it was within his grasp. Once more he turned to Cosimo, who advised him to accept. It was his only chance and there was every possibility of his gaining his end in a time of such trouble. So he accepted. The wisdom

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of his decision was patent at once when the Piccinino brothers did not refuse to serve under him.

Like most of the important towns in the Duchy, which had been held together solely by Visconti's personality, Pavia had proclaimed her independence of Milan. But Agnese del Maino was there and she set to work to intrigue for her son-in-law. She won over the captain of the castle and the town council offered Sforza Pavia with the title of Count on condition that he guaranteed its complete independence of Milan. Sforza knew that he was acting disloyally, but, as he pointed out to the Milanese commissioners who were sent to protest, if he refused, Pavia would surrender to Venice. This Milan realized, for, on sending deputies to Venice to request her to aid her sister Republic, she discovered that she could expect no help from that quarter. Sforza promised to respect the rights of Pavia, which was long loyal to his House, while the castellan Bolognino was, in accordance with terms agreed upon, adopted into the Attendolo clan. It was a valuable prize for Sforza, with its rich treasure of gold and jewels, its well-stocked armoury, its fine library, where many of the books had belonged to Petrarch, and its stores of grain.

The storming of Piacenza, where the full effects of artillery were realized for the first time in Italy, greatly added to Sforza's reputation, while the appalling sack that followed, in which the monasteries and churches were protected by his express orders, added to the terror of his name. It long remained deserted and was ultimately re-peopled by forcible methods. In 1448 Bianca Maria, who was the life and soul of her husband's policy during this period, when her knowledge of Milan and the Milanese made him turn to her continually for advice, again showed her mettle in fight. The Venetians were threatening Cremona, where she was. The twenty-three year old Countess put herself at the head of her citizens on horseback

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and led them into the fight, and when a Venetian shouted, Marco, Marco ! she flung the spear she was carrying at him, hitting him in the mouth with such force that he fell dead. Inspired by her example the people of Cremona fought on until they had heavily repulsed the enemy. Sforza's advance drove off the Venetian fleet, which he crushed near Lodi, and in this same year, 1448, he won the battle of Caravaggio, which, says Ricotti, was the most pregnant in results of any fought during the century. His prudence, circumspection, and unruffled calm were, according to Corio, almost superhuman when surprised by the great Venetian army. He had not even time to put on all his armour. Among the 30,000 prisoners were three Venetian generals, and the two civilian *Provveditori* in their crimson robes. The rank and file were released after being despoiled, for it would have been impossible to feed them, and their numbers made them dangerous ; the others entered Milan, escorted by the musketeers, the pride of the city. The booty was enormous.

The victory, however, inspired the government with less joy than terror. They at once began intriguing against the victorious general. Sforza had no illusions. He set about turning his success to his own advantage with the same cool calculation that had won him the battle. He realized that he was now too powerful for a subject and that any state he served would endeavour to compass his ruin as soon as he had ceased to be useful. His only hope was to establish himself as a ruler.

Sforza was advancing upon Brescia, a town promised him by the terms of his contract, when his advance was countermanded. He discovered that his employers were encouraging Brescia to hold out, saying that peace was within sight, and trying to sow dissatisfaction in his ranks by spreading rumours that they would not pay his men. The Venetians, who

had an eye for a man and a profound contempt for their sister republic, were anxious to win Sforza on any terms, while he knew that Milan was no less eager to make peace with Venice. A month after Caravaggio he came to terms with the Serenissima. Venice was to help him conquer Milan with men and money; he was to have everything that had belonged to Milan at the time of the death of the last Duke; all the rest was to go to Venice. The first result of this change of front was that several more towns came over to Sforza. When a deputation from Milan reproached him for his treachery and held forth at length upon all that the Republic had done for him, he in his turn drew attention to their treacherous conduct towards himself, adding that he had delayed all too long to take the dukedom that was his by right as well as by gift. He had not harmed them, he said, but taken steps to prevent them injuring him.

Sforza began advancing slowly upon Milan, threatening death to anyone who plundered or molested the inhabitants. He had to bribe his captains heavily, and even trust the Piccinino brothers, thereby losing the important town of Monza, and seeing them desert him for the Republic after three months. He was pressing the city closer and closer, cutting off supplies by his control of the Brianza and Abbiategrasso, and other food-producing districts, and there was every likelihood of its yielding, when once more the fear inspired by his growing power threatened his prospects. Venice treated him as his father-in-law had so often done. Thanks to Gonzaga's treachery and his own honesty, for the town had been offered to him, Venice obtained possession of Cremona. Having thus acquired all that was to be hers by the treaty, she threw over Sforza and came to terms with Milan, hoping thus to thwart him. Cosimo dei Medici continued to support and finance him.

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But Sforza's luck held. Instead of checking him, this move only hastened his triumph. In their joy and confidence at the prospect of relief the Milanese used up all that was left of the corn supply for sowing the fields. Francesco Piccinino died, but Sigismondo Malatesta was now in the employ of Venice. The Florentine ambassadors who had been sent to dissuade him from joining Alfonso of Aragon the previous year by pointing out the danger involved in increasing the power of Naples had been carefully chosen. They had gone to the trouble of showing him some beautifully illuminated manuscripts. Don Alfonso had engaged Malatesta and sent him a handsome advance upon his salary, but when Florence offered better terms, Sigismondo threw him over without returning the money. He subsequently entered the Venetian service and made a characteristically dashing attempt to break through and relieve Milan from the hated Sforza, but in vain.

Early in 1450 Colleoni was more successful, advancing through his own Bergamo district, but he was too late. Milan was now in dire straits from famine, the people living on rats and glad of a mouthful of bread. Deaths from starvation were frequent. Bianca Maria was using all her influence in the city, where she was popular. Sforza would be satisfied with nothing less than Milan and he knew that it must be now or never. He was beginning to find it difficult to feed his men, but he determined to risk an attack in the rear by the Venetians rather than loosen his grip on the prize.

The events that followed proved once again the truth of Aristotle's profound remark that revolutions are not caused by trifles, though they may be started by trifles. A couple of men fell to discussing the state of the city, others stopped to listen till a crowd gathered. It was rumoured that the slum region of Porta Nuova was under arms. The bells were rung and the mob was soon advancing upon the Corte

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d'Arenco, the old palace by the Duomo, where the Royal Palace now stands. They were led by Gaspare da Vimercate, a Ghibelline and, like most of the nobles, a sympathizer with Sforza. The Guelfs formed the Republican party. At first they were driven back by the troops guarding the palace, but it was getting dark and they were let in through another door that led to the apartments of the Duchess Maria, the neglected widow of Filippo Maria. The Venetian ambassador appeared at the top of the stairs, haranguing them on their disorderly conduct, promising help and trying to check them, but they rushed at him and killed him. A panic ensued among the guards and the mob was soon in possession of the palace.

In the assembly held next day in S. Maria della Scala no one dared mention Sforza, upon whose head a price had been set, till Vimercate, who had fought with him, got up and pointed out that they would all be dead of starvation before any other prince could help them. Sforza alone could save them from Venice. Vimercate was looked upon as the "guardian angel" of the rising and instantly it was decided to send him to the man who was doing his best to starve the city out and invite him to come to its aid. Probably there were many Sforzeschi in the crowd, who were only waiting for a lead. Vimercate may well have been working in Sforza's interests all along. Machiavelli truthfully observes that no possible circumstances could make Milan or Naples free. "This became clear after the death of Filippo Visconti, when Milan wanted to be free, but either could not or did not know how to preserve her freedom."

Sforza at once accepted the conditions proposed and on February 26th, 1450, he made his entry into the city. The starving inhabitants lined the roads for ten miles outside the gates and eagerly stripped the troops of the bread with which, by Sforza's orders, they had loaded themselves. The entry was to be made

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by the Porta Nuova, but here Ambrogio Trivulzio, who was bitterly opposed to Sforza, barred the way because he had not ratified the conditions separately. Vimercate brushed aside this opposition. Amid cries of Duca, Duca! Sforza, Sforza! Francesco made his triumphal progress through the city, the people pressing round him in the effort merely to touch his hand. Indeed, his well-trained horse was actually carried along some of the way and right into the cathedral by the cheering mob that was crushed against it. The enthusiastic citizens of the now defunct Republic had prepared a white canopy edged with cloth of gold, but he had declined to ride under it, saying that such things were superstitions of kings. He was going to pay homage to the Lord of the Universe before Whom all men were equal. The enthusiasm reached its zenith when he came out of the Cathedral on to the Piazza and was saluted Duke by the mob that had been execrating his name a few days earlier. He ate a little millet bread and took a draught of wine without dismounting outside the house of a friend and then returned to the camp of Vimercate whence he had come.

CHAPTER IV

FRANCESCO SFORZA, DUKE OF MILAN

ON March 22nd, for this seems to be the correct date, though Simonetta says the 25th, Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, signed the capitulations one by one and made his official entrance into his capital. With him on horseback were his wife, little Galeazzo Maria, aged six, and his brother Alessandro. He was escorted by all the chief officials and the ambassadors. On a platform outside the Cathedral, dressed in robes of white velvet, he was invested with the Ducal insignia. Gaspare da Vimercate bore the sceptre, the other emblems being carried by six of the leading nobles of Milan, Pusterla, Trivulzio, Visconti, Borromeo, Lampugnani, and Marliani. He then made his son Count of Pavia and Vimercate Count of Valenza. Five days of glorious feasting followed, with dancing and jousting in the afternoon, as the chronicler Cagnola, now a chamberlain, records with obvious satisfaction.

Sforza wished to be regarded as the heir of the Visconti, basing his claim upon a document said to have been drawn up in 1446. There is, however, no proof that this ever existed. The fact that he accepted the stringent conditions imposed upon him, by which, among other things, he confirmed all privileges and undertook to spend eight months a year in Milan, proves that he really owed his title to the Milanese, who were arrogating to themselves the rights of the Emperor.

Thus, at the age of forty-nine, Francesco Sforza attained the goal of his ambitions, the highest position

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ever attained by a condottiere. Henceforth he was looked up to as the ideal prince and warrior of the Quattrocento at a time when the other leading states of the peninsula were also beginning to be welded into something like unity, Naples under Alfonso d'Aragona, Florence under Cosimo and the Papacy under Martin V. Except in culture and as a patron of art and literature, in which the rulers of the smaller, but long established states like Rimini, Urbino or Ferrara surpassed him, he can bear comparison with the best of his coevals. He was undoubtedly the greatest warrior in Italy, but he owed his success at least as much to his common sense, tact and diplomatic skill and also, in some measure, to his wife, who brought him such right as he had to the Duchy. A notable fact is the genuine respect and friendship felt for him by the best rulers of his generation, such as Cosimo dei Medici and Federico d'Urbino. Another friend and admirer was Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, afterwards Pope Pius II, one of the ablest men of his day, who saw a good deal of him when he was in Milan. His description is interesting as showing the qualities then regarded as needful to a successful ruler :

"A man skilled in governing, whom nothing could tire, wise and acute in seizing an opportunity, cunning and clever in deceiving, cautious and far-seeing in avoiding traps and in divining the purpose of his enemy. In fact, so able and firm was he that it is anything but easy even for a man endowed with considerable eloquence to draw an adequate portrait of him." As a soldier he was the only captain of his day able to rival Niccolò Piccinino in the art of war, a judgment which is more of a tribute to Piccinino than to Sforza.¹

In his memoirs Pius II also describes the impression he made when he rode into Mantua for the Congress of 1459. Though nearly sixty, he looked like a young

¹ *Asiae Europaeque Elegantissima Descriptio*, p. 1, 154.

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man, tall and stately in build, grave in aspect, calm and gracious in conversation, princely in carriage, "with a rare combination of physical and mental gifts, unconquered in battle"; yet his grandfather hardly owned sufficient land to plough.

As a matter of fact Sforza possessed many of the best qualities of his father, in addition to a polish that enabled him to take his place naturally in the great world, and complete control of his countenance and temper. He recalls some of the best of the Roman emperors, Trajan, for instance, or Hadrian, a comparison that is confirmed by his medals and portraits.

Once he had formed a plan everything else was subordinated to it and he could wait as well as plan. With such ambitions as his, he had no choice but to adopt the moral standards of the world in which he moved. As Machiavelli saw, it rarely, if ever, happens, least of all in Quattrocento Italy, that men rise from small to great positions without violence or fraud: "for great men consider it a shame to lose, not to win by deceiving". Judged by the standards of his day, and in spite of his twenty-two bastards, he was a model of conduct, neither vengeful, nor malicious, respectful to the Church, and, with rare exceptions, just in his dealings. He was also a speaker so impressive that people would listen to him, we are told, as though he were a second Nestor.

Strong and active, he excelled in all manly sports and could endure any hardship. So profound was his sleep that he needed very little of it. Neither private cares, nor the sounds of the noisiest revelry in camp could rob him of it. Like his father, he preferred simple food and cheerful company at meals. He rarely ate alone and was easy of access, even at meal-times, and patient in listening to tales of distress, which he did his best to relieve. He was generous to a fault. When Cosimo dei Medici rebuked him, bidding him think of his children, he answered the

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great merchant prince, rather tactlessly, perhaps, that he had never been a merchant, nor did he intend to learn to be one now. If his children were good, there would be plenty for them; if not, nothing he could put by for them would be enough.

One of the first acts of the new Duke was to set about rebuilding the castle. There was some opposition, but the idea was soon received with enthusiasm and he was able to start upon what was one of the two great monuments of his reign almost immediately. "Every day the said Count and Duke had 4,000 workmen there so that he ran it up very rapidly", says a chronicler; but, as a matter of fact, work was often stopped for want of funds. Machiavelli thought it a mistake. "And if Count Francesco Sforza, who became Duke of Milan, was held to be wise, and yet built a castle in Milan, I say that in this case he was not wise. Events have proved that such a castle brought disaster, not security to his heirs."¹ Instead of trying to win the affection of their subjects the Sforzas trusted to the castle for protection. They lost the city as soon as it was attacked and the castle was worse than useless. Artillery had made a fortress a greater danger to its defenders than to their enemies, as Machiavelli proves conclusively.

Two of Sforza's most important captains now began to cause trouble, thus giving him an admirable excuse for reducing their power. Carlo Gonzaga, who had changed sides more than once already, intrigued with Venice, from hatred of his brother, the Marquis of Mantua, Ludovico Gonzaga, whom Sforza had just engaged as condottiere. He was thrown into prison, his men added to the army of Milan and his town of Tortona seized. When his brother came to Milan in 1451, he was released, but not until he had renounced all that Sforza had given him for his services. William of Montferrat had been imprisoned for treachery in

¹ *Discorsi*, II, 24. Cp. *Principe*, c. 20.

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1449. He was only released after being stripped of all his property. Sforza also seized his town of Alessandria. Both fled to Venice and were soon fighting against Sforza.

By way of compensation he was, for a time, joined by the redoubtable Colleoni. Jealous because the supreme command of the Venetian forces was given to the brother of the defunct Gattamelata, he refused to attend the ceremony of the presenting of the baton and asked that his contract might be cancelled. The Venetians were not anxious to see such a soldier in the ranks of their enemies, so, after mature deliberation, they decided to murder him. Jacopo Piccinino was entrusted with the task, but his surprise attack failed. Colleoni just managed to leap onto a mule and escape to Milan. Yet in a short time he was once again in the service of the Serenisima. Alfonso of Naples, whose enthusiasm for Humanism knew no limits, sent Porcello, "a Roman citizen and a distinguished poet", to Piccinino in order that he might write his account of the struggle which is included in Muratori (Vol. 20). He also obtained permission to visit Sforza's army, which filled him with admiration and he promised to commit all he had seen to literature. So, at least, Simonetta assures us.

The appearance of René d'Anjou as the ally of Milan was a doubtful advantage. Sforza was at the front, but Bianca Maria gave him a great welcome at Pavia. First came an elaborate speech delivered by a scholar of standing, followed by balls, hunts in the park and every kind of entertainment—"By my faith, the Most Illustrious Duchess has treated the King with honour and respect enough for a Pope or an Emperor", says a chronicler. Sforza was no less annoyed at René's lingering at Milan instead of pressing forward to join him than was Bianca Maria by his lazy habits and the behaviour of his men. The French showed a want of discipline and a brutality towards the civil population

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that were to become only too familiar to the Italians. Sforza employed them as little as possible. So enraged were they at the siege of Pontevico because the Italians got into the town before them and left them nothing to plunder that they fell upon the inhabitants. Sforza's troops were roused to intervene and attacked them in order to protect their countrymen. Yet the terror inspired by their unprofessional ways was all to the advantage of Sforza. Several towns surrendered from fear of meeting with a like fate.

The war dragged on till 1454. The capture of Constantinople by Mahomet II in 1453 came as a great shock to Christendom, notably to the Pope, as head of the Church, and to Venice with her important Eastern trade. The Powers were tired of war and peace was made at Lodi. All that Venice gained was the solitary town of Crema, a paltry prize after her efforts to seize the whole of Lombardy, first from the Ambrosian Republic, then from the parvenu Duke.

Henceforth the peace of Italy hinged almost entirely upon the alliance between Milan, Florence and Naples. The bond with Naples was cemented by a double marriage, which proved of considerable importance in the history of Milan. Francesco's eldest daughter, Ippolita, one of the most notable princesses of the day, was betrothed to Alfonso, Alfonso of Aragon's grandson and heir, and the Duke's third son, Sforza Maria, to Leonora of Aragon. The Sforzas were thus taking rank among the ruling houses of Italy, but, though cemented by no marriages, it was still the long-standing friendship with Cosimo dei Medici that meant most to the Duke. He shortly afterwards strengthened his hold upon Milan by appointing his half-brother to the vacant see of his capital.

The death of King Alfonso threatened the peace of Italy. Cosimo would have liked Sforza to throw over the Catalans and support the claims of Anjou. But he

saw more clearly. He had not forgotten the Visconti policy and he realized that the French claims to Milan might prove dangerous and would be doubly so if a French king ruled in Naples. By this wise attitude he gradually made Alfonso's formidable bastard son, Ferrante, who succeeded him, into a friend almost as loyal as Cosimo. Indeed, it was largely to the Duke of Milan and to the new Pope, Pius II, that Ferrante owed his throne. The Duke's brother, Alessandro Sforza, gave Ferrante invaluable aid in the war with René and the revolting barons. Out of gratitude he conferred upon young Sforza Maria the duchy of Bari, which long remained in the possession of the family. Jacopo Piccinino was fighting for René and it was in this campaign that the two schools of the Bracceschi and Sforzeschi met for the last time. The difference between them is thus described by Simonetta :

"Niccolò was more eager to fight and join battle at once, as occasion offered, to surprise the enemy by his quickness, to wear him down by continual attacks, preferring light cavalry to infantry, being more daring, strong soldiers. But Francesco was more prudent, using keen skill and knowledge, rarely joining battle except deliberately, wearing down the enemy by Fabian tactics and by sieges, setting great store upon his infantry ; his men were better equipped with silver, gold and silk, strong and brave, more numerous, generally superior in numbers ; he never despised his foe, nor attacked him rashly."

On this occasion the rapidity of Piccinino's march to the Southern King and through hostile territory awakened universal admiration. But the Sforzeschi and Ferrante ended by getting the best of him. With Piccinino was no less a person than Lucrezia d'Alagna, the famous mistress of the dead king Alfonso, who, to escape the grasping Ferrante, transferred her charms, now doubtless beginning to wane, and her great wealth to him until he made peace with her enemy.

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The resentment felt by Charles VII and René d'Anjou against the Duke of Milan for refusing to support them in Genoa and Naples respectively ultimately turned to his advantage, because they won him the friendship of the Dauphin, soon to be Louis XI, with whom they had quarrelled. Before he came to the throne Louis recognized Sforza's claims to Milan in a treaty by which they bound themselves to support each other against their enemies. The Sforza luck held, as usual, and Francesco knew how to turn this alliance into a genuine friendship, thanks largely to his sincerity and his unswerving loyalty; but it was his diplomatic skill alone that saved the situation upon Louis' accession in 1461. The King naturally looked at things from a different angle to the Dauphin in opposition to his father, and began by pressing the claims of his House in Italy, demanding that Sforza should ally himself with Ferrante of Naples and help the King of Naples. This Sforza had no intention of doing, but he brought Louis to understand that his friendship was of more value than hazy schemes of conquest. When in 1464 a Genoese deputation came to Milan to take the oath of allegiance, he could pride himself on having recovered the whole of the Visconti Duchy.

The Congress of Mantua in 1459, when Pius II endeavoured to realize the dream of his life and lead a great crusade of the whole Christendom to recover Constantinople, was doomed to failure from the first, but the House of Sforza played a prominent part in it. Galeazzo Maria, the heir to the Duchy, then a young man of sixteen, received the Pope at Florence with a troop of 350 horses and welcomed him with the inevitable speech, bristling with classical allusions and quotations, which had been written for him by Guinforte Barzizza, a scholar and Humanist of distinction, who was for some time the boy's tutor, and who had formerly been employed by Filippo Maria

Visconti. This was an art in which the Sforza children were carefully trained. Bianca Maria had herself been admirably taught. According to Filelfo she was almost entirely responsible for the education of her children, as her husband was much away. On one occasion she told Filelfo that they must not forget that they were educating princes, not scholars, and the boys' time was equally divided between bodily exercises, such as riding, fencing, dancing and ball-playing (pallone) and mental instruction, with the full approval of Filelfo, who drew up the scheme. She once set them as a subject for an essay, "In what manner and by what rules and with what artifices are treaties made between princes?" Galeazzo was clearly a boy of parts and Barzizza appears to have thought well of him, as we gather from his letters to his mother.¹ The boy's own letters to his mother begin to throw some of that curiously intimate light on the everyday life of the princely families of Italy which is a sure sign that we have reached the dawn of the Renaissance.

Unquestionably Galeazzo Maria made a favourable impression. Frederic III used to say that one of the most notable things he heard in Italy was the Latin speech made him by Galeazzo at Ferrara at the age of eight, whither he had been sent by his father to welcome the Emperor. He described it as something astonishing and miraculous and took great pleasure in recalling it. This oration had been composed by Filelfo. It is difficult for us to realize the delight the men of the Renaissance, whose imaginations were alive with memories of the Roman Senate and who idolized Livy and Cicero, would take in listening to speeches of this kind. For them it was one of the greatest and most genuine pleasures. It also satisfied their taste for the dramatic which a later and more fortunate generation could indulge at the theatre. It is

¹ *Guinforte Barzizza. Arch. Stor. Lomb., 1894.*

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significant that Orator was the word for an ambassador. One remembers the story of Alfonso of Aragon being so enthralled by the speech of a Florentine ambassador that he sat motionless, listening to it to the end without raising his hand to brush a fly from his nose. The speeches were generally in Latin, more rarely Italian. Eloquence is often classed among the most important gifts of a prince. Francesco Sforza's speeches to his men were highly thought of, but this was an art in which Federico Montefeltro of Urbino led the way. Galeazzo also made two speeches before the Grand Council of Venice in 1455 on the occasion of a visit in connection with the Peace of Lodi. These have been preserved by Sanudo. At Florence Galeazzo fairly won the Pope's heart: he was always in his company. Though only sixteen, "such was his manner, his gift of speech, his ability, his energy that he displayed something more than the wisdom of a man; in mien and gesture he had the grave dignity of a man; his ordinary talk was such that another could scarcely have spoken as well after careful thought. There was nothing childish, nothing frivolous in anything he did. It was amazing to hear the ripe wisdom of age from the lips of youth."

Bianca Maria was at Mantua to receive Pius with her whole family—"a woman of great spirit and notable wisdom" [he says], "with her four sons, who might have been angels from Heaven". Ippolita, then aged fourteen, made him a Latin speech, which delighted the Pope. She was to be one of the gifted princesses of the Renaissance. Baldo Martorelli was her tutor, and she was the pupil of Lascaris, the great Greek scholar, who dedicated more than one work to her and who later went on to Naples, which he found so attractive that he could not be induced to return to Milan. After this trip, on which he must have been a good deal spoilt, Galeazzo Maria became troublesome, refusing to open a book, much to the distress

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of his mother and of Barzizza. His father writes that he is afraid of no one and does exactly what he pleases.

Francesco was the first of the Italian princes to appear at the Congress, though he did not arrive until September, and the only ruler of note. Perhaps this fact may have enhanced the Pope's enthusiasm for him. He came along the Mincio with forty-seven ships. He made a great impression upon all those present, so worthy did he seem to rule in look and bearing. His suite glittered in gold and silk and silver, and men thought how great must be the Pope, if such a Prince came to kiss his feet. At least so Pius assures us in his Commentaries. But he showed no intention of going on a Crusade, wisely suggesting that the fighting should be done by the princes and peoples situated near the Turks, the Italians providing money and supplies. The Pope was very disappointed, but what prince, least of all the Duke of Milan, could have ventured to leave his state at the mercy of his neighbours to go after such a will-o'-the-wisp?

Francesco wrote frequently to Bianca Maria, who had returned home, while he was at Mantua, apologizing on one occasion for missing a few days, as he was preparing to leave and had been so busy that he had scarcely had time to eat. The specimens given by Pastor¹ show that he kept his wife informed of every detail of the progress of the Congress. His presence led to the other Italian states at least sending envoys, thus preventing the Congress, abortive though it was, from being an utter fiasco.

When at last Francesco thought of listening to the Pope's entreaties and promised to send a contingent, he declared his intention of giving the command to his fourth son, Ludovico, then aged thirteen, "a young man of distinguished parts", says Simonetta, who was later to feel the weight of his hand, upon whom

¹ *Popes*, VII, 390-91.

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Francesco placed the highest hopes, inspired, he used to say, by a kind of conviction. The standard for the Crusade was given the boy with great ceremony after he had been knighted by his brother. This entirely contradicts Arluno's story that his father, foreseeing his evil disposition, could not endure the sight of him and hardly treated him as a son.¹ From the very first Ludovico impressed those about the court as the cleverest of the brothers. At the age of sixteen we find him writing to his mother, whose favourite he was, from Castraleone (September 18th, 1467), saying that he is obeying her in writing her a weekly Latin letter. He tells her that he has been hawking and has killed seventy quails, two partridges and a pheasant, "not that your Ladyship must think that I am forgetting my work, which will bring me much more profit than hawking". There we have the Renaissance prince.

Francesco Filelfo, a native of Tolentino in the March, was the glory of Milan at a time when every court was expected to have a Humanist or two in its pay. He is generally considered to have been the worst-tempered and foulest-tongued of all that arrogant, vain, mercenary tribe, whose bad qualities were aggravated tenfold by the deference shown them in high quarters. He was, however, a genuine scholar, with a profound knowledge of Greek for his day, certainly the greatest scholar of his time in Italy. He was an indefatigable worker, as ready to teach a needy, but promising boy for love of learning, as to pour out the vilest Billingsgate upon the head of the patron who had disappointed him or the rival who had criticized him—and to laud to the skies a prince who received him and paid him well.

It must be admitted that he was unlucky and that his ill-luck was due as much to the times in which he lived as to any fault of his own. Born in 1398, such were

¹ Pèlissier, *Louis XII et L. Sforza*, I, 79.

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his abilities that he was a Professor at Padua at eighteen. In order to learn Greek he obtained a post from the Venetian Government at Constantinople. Here his enthusiasm and hard work, though he did not neglect his official duties, not only won him the affection of his teacher, Giovanni Chrysoloras, but also attracted the notice of the Emperor, Manuel Palaeologus. He took him into his service and sent him on various missions, even as his ambassador to Buda. Here, too, he loved and won Theodora, the beautiful fourteen year old daughter of his master, though there is reason to believe that he violated her first. She was well-born and well-dowered and to her more than to any teacher he always said he owed his knowledge of the purest Greek, for girls of her class were kept in the strictest seclusion and never allowed to converse with strangers.

By this time Filelfo had acquired a considerable reputation and his friends in Venice were continually trying to tempt him back with the most generous offers. At last he decided to throw up all his prospects and return to Italy. But when he arrived he found Venice in the grip of the plague; all his friends had fled, and though they wrote him charming letters—one of them talked of his enduring his troubles with the patience of a true philosopher—he could get no money. Moreover, his books—he had a remarkable Greek library—and all his wife's clothes were beyond his reach, as they were stored in a room where someone had died of the plague. So he determined to try Bologna.

Here he was received with the greatest respect by everyone, from the Cardinal Legate downwards, and given a well-paid post at the University. With his mercurial temperament he was delighted. He could not say enough in praise of the learned city. But a revolution occurred in favour of the exiled Bentivoglio family, the Cardinal was expelled and Filelfo

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was once more on the pavement. However, a Humanist of such note had a wide choice of patrons and he accepted a good offer from Florence. Once more he was in the seventh heaven. Everyone treated him with the profoundest deference and his lectures were crowded. In the morning he lectured on the Latin writers, in the afternoon on the Greek, while on Sundays he expounded Dante in public lectures in the Duomo.

Here, however, he could not rule the roost so completely. There were able rivals, who ventured to criticize, and Filelfo was anything but patient. Chief of these was Niccoli. His tongue and his pen soon made him more enemies than he had friends, and these among the scholars who were intimate with the Medici. Cosimo dei Medici became one of his special bugbears. In 1433 an attempt was made on his life by a bravo, almost certainly hired by the Medici party. His delight when they were expelled knew no bounds. While Cosimo was in prison Filelfo urged his enemies to make an end of him. On the return of the Medici, thinking it wise to move, he went to Siena and in his turn sent a bravo to murder Cosimo. The man was arrested almost as soon as he reached Florence.

Shortly afterwards, in spite of his record, he received a pressing invitation from Filippo Maria Visconti to come to Milan, where he was to spend the happiest years of his life. The Duke was not in need of money and treated him liberally. On New Year's Day, 1440, at the reception of the nobles, he gave Filelfo a valuable diamond ring, treating him like the greatest in the land, to his immense gratification. He was continually being called on to make official speeches for which he received handsome presents. He was able to live as luxuriously and extravagantly as he liked. In fact, the Duke won his regard in the only way in which it was possible to keep it. He once said that he cared nothing for gold without honour, or

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for honour without gold. He was given a well-appointed house and made a citizen of Milan. Pope Eugenius did not even deign to answer the letter in which, on the death of his wife, he suggested that he should let him take orders and provide him with adequate benefices, but Filippo Maria, after forbidding him to entertain the idea, found him another charming, well-dowered wife of good birth. In fact, his only grievance against the Duke was that he preferred Tuscan to Latin, which he did not understand, whereas Filelfo was never quite at ease in Italian. But at the Duke's request he produced a commentary upon Petrarch, Visconti's favourite poet. It is a poor performance, for, with all his learning, Filelfo was no poet and was incapable of appreciating Petrarch.

The Visconti's death was a blow to Filelfo. He began by supporting the Republic, even making speeches on its behalf, but he could not conceal the poor opinion he really had of the new government, and it was soon suspected that his sympathies were Ghibelline. It is not surprising that he was chosen to make the speech by the deputation which offered Sforza the Dukedom. Meanwhile he had lost his second wife. His grief was genuine, for he was an affectionate, if not too faithful husband and a loving father. Again he thought of embracing the ecclesiastical status, but Nicholas V, though readily granting the permission, said nothing about the benefices. When Sforza became Duke, his prospects were so improved that he decided to take a third wife.¹

Sforza was always short of money and Filelfo found it impossible to get his salary, nor did he improve his

¹ Filelfo was *τρίτοχος*, a fact of which he was very proud. He had twelve sons and twelve daughters by his three wives, though only five survived, and a number of bastards. In his morals and way of life he differed little from other men of his day—from his patron Francesco Sforza, for one. There is reason to think that, like other Humanists, he was also a pervert.

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prospects by his gift for making enemies, which earned him the hatred of the hard pressed Treasury officials. Indeed, from now on he became a prolific and expert writer of begging letters, fawning upon or threatening his many influential friends in all parts of Italy to induce them to send him money; and it cannot be denied that he was remarkably successful. His patrons kept him out of want, if they could never give him enough for his needs. It required three letters to get a piece of crimson cloth and a number of compliments out of Alessandro Sforza of Pesaro, who had been exhorted to show a generosity worthy of his great namesake. His speech in honour of the marriage of Tristano Sforza to a d'Este proved sterile of material reward because he had omitted to harp on the ancient origin of the bride's family. Once, when Cicco Simonetta invited Filelfo to dinner, he thanked him, but said that he would thank him far more heartily if he could get him paid the 2,000 florins due on his salary. He was obliged to decline, he continued, because he had friends from Bologna coming to dine, but he would be eternally grateful for a dish from Cicco's sumptuous banquet to grace his humble scholar's board—if, of course, he could send him one without having trouble with his wife, of whom it was notorious that Cicco went in perpetual fear and trembling. The custom of sending a dish by way of present has not yet altogether died out, at least in South Italy. Cicco was a good scholar and a generous patron of other men of learning as well as of Filelfo.

Filelfo's letters and poems make it clear that the arch blackmailer, Pietro Aretino, only carried his methods a little further. The foulness and scurrility of his attacks upon his enemies, though no worse than those of Poggio and other Humanists, must be read to be believed. He appears at his worst in his treatment of Pius II, whom he claimed as a former pupil. Pius began by granting him a handsome pension, but soon

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found that he was unable to pay it. Filelfo's attacks and lampoons upon the universally respected Pope were so outrageous that Sforza was obliged, in order to allay the feeling that they had awakened, to imprison him and his son, who was also implicated, for a while. As Filelfo never mentions the fact, nor apparently bore Sforza any ill-will, it is probable that the Duke let him know how he was placed. On one occasion, when he was presented with a handsome silver bowl for a piece of work, Filelfo hastened to give it to the Duke, who was then holding a Council, with the remark that he cared no more for gold and silver than for other things that were not within our power ; in fact, God and virtue were all that he valued. Unfortunately, the strong temptations of the flesh and the very ample requirements of his liberal way of living generally managed to thrust these higher things somewhat into the background. But his passion for books was genuine, nor had he the prejudice of Federico of Urbino, who said that he would not admit a printed book into his library. In 1474 he talks of buying " some of those codices which are now made without any effort and without a pen, but certainly not without beauty, for they look like the work of a skilled and careful scribe ".

Meanwhile he was about to bring eternal glory upon the Duke by his Latin poem, the *Sforziade*, celebrating his deeds from the death of his father-in-law to his conquest of Milan, a wholly uninspired performance, of which only eight books saw the light. Its quality may be judged from Filelfo's method of paying Bianca Maria a compliment for her heroic deeds at Cremona. The Sun, lost in admiration, hastens to Jupiter and begs him to drive his car for the day while he disguises himself as Sforza and makes love to the Duchess. Jupiter may have sympathized, but he refused.

In 1453 Pope Martin V treated him generously and welcomed him with great respect in Rome. Alfonso

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of Aragon was even more deferential. He made him a knight, granted him permission to use his own arms and crowned him with a chaplet of bay as a poet. But perhaps the most remarkable proof of the honour in which he was held came after his return to Milan. Constantinople had fallen and he heard that his mother-in-law and two of his first wife's sisters were to be the slaves of the conqueror. Francesco Sforza condoled with him and sent two young men to Constantinople with a letter and an ode from Filelfo to Mahomet II, whereupon he gave orders for their release.

Filelfo was attached to Sforza and regretted him. It was he who pronounced his funeral oration. His feelings when Galeazzo Maria reduced his salary and rarely paid even that can be imagined. His views upon the three dukes are contained in a letter. Filippo Maria Visconti rivalled the most glorious princes in magnificence, liberality and every other virtue; and yet his admirable biographer and secretary, Decembrio, considers that he was not too generous to men of learning, doubtless recollecting his own rewards. Such are the Renaissance Humanists. Francesco Sforza, Filelfo goes on to say, had left him in poverty, because no man cares for things of which he knows nothing. The Duke had many virtues, but he had little love for scholarship. But, according to Bandello (Novella 6)—who, it is true, belonged to a younger generation—though Sforza was no scholar, having been trained to arms under his father from tender years, yet he always loved men who were learned, no matter in what science, and gave them liberal salaries. Galeazzo Maria treated Filelfo, he avers, as badly as he did all scholars, against whom he had declared war. Gregorio Leto truly said that Filelfo's praise and his blame were alike worthless, since they were measured by the presents he received.

The result was that Filelfo tried to begin his career over again in Rome under Sixtus IV, where he was

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given a well-endowed chair. But money was not easy to come by in that extravagant court and he published a well deserved satire upon the Papal treasurer. He had long ago made his peace with the Medici, whom he had once urged Filippo Maria to exterminate ; indeed, he had always spoken fairly well of Lorenzo and in 1481 he was offered a Professorship of Greek in Florence. Though eighty-three, he gladly accepted, but he died a month after reaching the city.

Decembrio is now remembered solely for his invaluable life of Filippo Maria Visconti, but in his own day he was a Humanist of mark, with that good knowledge of Greek which in the Quattrocento was enough in itself to confer distinction upon any man. On his tomb in S. Ambrogio he is recorded as having written 127 books. It is pleasing to remember that, to his great delight, he found his house and library intact when he returned to Milan after the fall of the Republic.

CHAPTER V

THE LATER YEARS OF FRANCESCO SFORZA

SFORZA now became involved in a tragedy that created great stir at the time, the murder of Jacopo Piccinino. After the defeat of the Angevins the condottiere had taken service with Ferrante of Naples, who paid him generously and gave him a considerable property of which Sulmona was the chief town. He saw with his own eyes the ruthless way in which Ferrante removed from his path everyone who was in the slightest degree dangerous, utterly indifferent to oaths, promises or their past services, and he understood that there were few people of whom the King had better reason to be afraid than himself, with his great name, his large army, his many friends and admirers, and his broad possessions in the kingdom. Nor was the King likely to forgive the injury he had done him by supporting the Angevins. So he asked Sforza to take him into his service and give him his daughter, Drusiana, in marriage. This Sforza had long promised to do, but the fact that they were generally fighting on opposite sides had made it hitherto impossible.

Drusiana, being the daughter of Colombina of Acquapendente, was one of the most favoured of Sforza's bastards. Like the rest of her family, she had been legitimized by the Pope. She had been brought up by Bianca Maria, who was really attached to her. She had now reached what was for those days the mature age of twenty-seven. The rank and file of the Duke's bastard daughters were generally sent into convents, where they might pray for the souls of their father and of other members of the family.

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Sforza consented. Jacopo Piccinino was, in any case, a desirable match and his support might be useful, since he was the foremost condottiere in Italy. So in 1464 he went north, undeterred by sundry warnings and prognostications on the road. He received a great welcome in Milan, where his father-in-law elect cannot have been too pleased to hear him greeted with loud cheers and the old cry of Braccio ! Braccio ! The romantic dash and brilliance of the Braceschi appealed irresistibly to the mob. The marriage was celebrated quietly owing to the death of Cosimo dei Medici, which Francesco felt sincerely. Drusiana received a dowry of 90,000 ducats.

Next year, in 1465, Piccinino was seized with a longing to return to Naples and re-visit his lands and his men. Ferrante promised to welcome him with open arms. Francesco approved of the plan. Yet he put off going. At last he was induced to make up his mind, starting with a heavy heart. Bianca Maria gave a magnificent hunting-party at Pavia for Drusiana, before she left. Then followed more festivities for the marriage of Ippolita Sforza, her eldest daughter, to Alfonso, Duke of Calabria. His brother, Don Federigo, aged thirteen, had come to escort the bride to Naples. There was a whole week of dancing and jousting and hunting at Pavia, Francesco himself insisting on taking part in all the gaiety. Then the bride also started on her way to Naples.

Piccinino sent his wife to Sulmona, while he himself went on to Naples. "The King came to meet the said Count Jacopo *con tanto trionfo* and escorted him back to Naples and there he remained full twenty-seven days and every day more honours were bestowed upon him and he delayed laying hands upon him till his son and the bride had reached a place of safety. Learning that they were staying at Florence for S. John's Day to enjoy the feast, on that very day King Ferrante had Count Jacopo arrested, and he



[Ahinari Photo]

FRANCESCO SFORZA
Relief by Gian Cristoforo Romano

took him in this way. On S. John's Day, between the 20th and the 21st hour, he said to him: 'Count Jacopo, I have shown you all Naples and all my possessions; now I would show you my treasure.' But the Count was asking him to give him leave to depart, and he had asked him many times, but he kept him by his talk, awaiting his son and the bride, as has been said already. Then he conducted the said Count Jacopo into the castle and when they were in a hall the King took leave of him, saying, 'I will be back in a moment.' When he had withdrawn, a body of armed Catalans entered and laid hands upon Count Jacopo, saying: 'Be of stout heart, Count Jacopo, you are the King's prisoner.' And with these words he was thrown into prison, he and some of his suite."¹ Piccinino was not murdered at once. Finally Ferrante gave out that his death was due to an accident. With him perished his son and the members of his suite, who might have proved awkward witnesses. The deed was quite in accordance with all that we know of Ferrante, who was a monster of cruelty. He openly boasted that he liked to have the mummies of his deceased enemies about him.

The news of Piccinino's arrest greatly perturbed Sforza, for he had been given a Milanese escort headed by no less a person than Pietro Pusterla. Sforza wrote at once to his ambassador, bidding him use every effort to procure the release of his son-in-law and despatched his son, Tristano, to remonstrate with Ferrante. He was horrified when he heard of the murder, though he cannot have been surprised. In those cynical days it was at once believed that he was a party to the crime. Pope Paul II spoke of Sforza's share in the murder in open Consistory, calmly adding that the deed would promote the peace of Italy. Even Corio believed that he planned it because, with his popularity and prestige, Piccinino would

¹ *Crist. da Soldo, ap. Muratori*, Vol. 21, 903.

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have been a grave menace to his children after his own death.

Sforza's letters to his ambassador show that he was well aware what would be said and that the deed "would bring infamy upon the said Majesty of the king and also upon us".¹ But the documents given by Rosmini are a convincing proof of his innocence.

He at once ordered the bridal party to halt where they were. He even talked of attacking Ferrante with all his strength. Finally, however, he yielded to the prayers of the Pope, of Florence and of Ferrante himself. After being delayed at Siena for a month the bride was allowed to proceed towards Naples. Ferrante had now succeeded in wresting the whole of his kingdom from the French. Nothing could bring Count Jacopo back to life and it would be a pity to quarrel with one of the most powerful kings in the peninsula by refusing to permit the marriage and possibly to endanger the peace of Italy.

The murder of the last of the Bracceschi soon found its way into popular poetry :

Pianga il grande e il piccolino
de' Bracceschi e ogni soldato
poich' è morto il nominato
Conte Jacom Piccinino.

Egli ajuto era e consiglio
dell' Italia vedovella :
di dolore a capo chino
piange il grande e il piccinino . . .

Brilliant and secure though Sforza's position might appear to the casual observer, it took but little to show how unstable were the foundations upon which it was built. In 1461 he became seriously ill with dropsy and it was widely rumoured that he was dead. There were, in consequence, several risings, notably at Piacenza ; for though, as Cagnola puts it, " the prince

¹ *La Morte di J. Piccinino, Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1878.

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was much beloved by and acceptable to the magnates and the people of Milan ” and also to Pavia and other large towns where he was well known, this was far from being the case everywhere. Indeed, so alarming was the unrest that the Duke sent Antonio Vailati to make a detailed report upon the political feeling in the various districts of the Duchy. The report, which is very interesting, was anything but encouraging. The Guelphs were everywhere enemies of the Duke and they were often the stronger party. The dethroned despots fomented opposition in the hope of recovering their little states and Venice was only too delighted to stir up trouble. Vailati reported that, round Castelnovo, there was not a single person who desired to continue under his master’s rule, while in many other places the news of his illness was received with open rejoicing.¹ Yet there could be no doubt of the great improvement in prosperity and security during his reign throughout the Duchy. One of Sforza’s condottieri, Tiberto Brandolini, was found to be the ringleader in the disturbances and was duly executed. The eldest of his bastard sons, Sforza, a brother of Polissena and Drusiana, was also implicated and imprisoned by his father. Florence offered to send help and to uphold his wife and children, if necessary. She had no desire to see the Duchy fall to pieces with a proportionate increase of the power of Venice and possibly of France.

The change in the orientation of Sforza’s policy, notably his close alliance with Louis XI, resulted in a re-arrangement of the family marriages. A suggestion that Galeazzo Maria, the Count of Pavia, should marry Louis’ own sister-in-law, Bona, a daughter of the Duke of Savoy, was not to be lightly set aside. Her mother was a daughter of the King of Cyprus, the beautiful Anne de Lusignan. She had been brought up at the French court and Louis made the proposal without so

¹ *Informazioni Politiche sul Ducato di Milano, Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1892.

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much as consulting her father. Bona had already been betrothed to Edward IV of England.

Francesco's method of getting rid of earlier entanglements may grate unpleasantly upon modern sensibilities, but to a contemporary it seemed perfectly natural, as, also, in all probability to the princesses themselves. It had long been settled that the Count of Pavia should marry one of the Gonzagas of Mantua. At first it was to be the eldest daughter, but in 1457 the Marquis suggested that it should be the younger, Dorotea, because his eldest had developed spinal trouble. When the Savoy marriage began to be mooted it was rumoured that Dorotea also was suffering from the same complaint. The consequence was that doctors were sent from Milan to examine her. It is quite possible that there was truth in the reports. However that may be, the Marquis declined to allow the examination to take place. Bianca Maria, who was attached to the Gonzagas, continued to favour the match. But the death of Dorotea from fever in 1467 cut the knot. It soon began to be whispered that Galeazzo Maria had had her poisoned, but there are not the slightest grounds for the suspicion, which was entirely in accordance with the beliefs of the day. A person of position had only to die when the party who would benefit most from the death would very soon find himself accused more or less openly of having compassed it by poison.

The last important act of Sforza's life was the despatch of an expedition to help Louis XI against his enemies in the War of the Public Weal. It consisted of 500 men-at-arms and 3,000 infantry, commanded by his son and heir, the Count of Pavia, though the real leader was Gaspare da Vimercate. On the way thither, at Vercelli, Galeazzo Maria paid a visit to Maria of Savoy, the neglected widow of Filippo Maria Visconti. In the early days of his success Francesco had received all her appeals and

advances with mocking, contemptuous answers. When she went to church she had been obliged to hear prayers for her rival, Agnese del Maino. She was now old and infirm, but she kept Galeazzo to supper, and he had the pleasure, in accordance with the Piedmontese custom, of kissing over twenty girls—a pleasure which he again enjoyed when he was entertained by the Bishop of Turin. The Milanese troops were employed in the South, operating in Dauphiné and the Lyonnais. They performed valuable service by diverting considerable Burgundian forces from the main scene of the campaign in the North and made several raids into Burgundian territory. This was Galeazzo Maria's first campaign. He had not had the long, stern discipline and training of the old condottieri, and his character was unformed. He was a tyro in arms and behaved accordingly. Francesco was obliged to reprove him for so far forgetting himself as to hunt and tilt with his men, wise though he may have been to keep them occupied after the peace.

A highly interesting document for the light it throws on the character of Francesco Sforza is the *Suggerimenti di Buon Vivere* addressed to his heir in 1457. These suggestions for good conduct show how, at bottom, he was still the simple soldier, the son of his father, whose peasant shrewdness they reflect. Nothing so unsophisticated could have come from the Renaissance courts of the next generation.¹ It begins, "Galeazzo, you know that until now we have never been angry with you, nor have we given you a single blow." In this way, he says, his father has been able to study his character while he was still a child. But now that Galeazzo can begin to distinguish between right and wrong, he hastens to set forth some rules of conduct

¹ I am indebted for my information to Miss Ady's *History of Milan Under the Sforza*, as I have not been able to see the original.

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for him to follow, if he would keep the good opinion of his parents. By doing his duty as a son, he will be blessed by God and by his parents and will win universal good will. He then enunciates ten precepts, in which he may have remembered the very practical advice his own father had given him on the eve of his marriage. "Galeazzo must do honour to God and to the Church ; he must be respectful and obedient to his parents, to Messer Guinforte [his tutor] and to all other good and wise people ; he must show politeness according to their rank, 'whether with cap or with head or with knee' ; he must be pleasant of speech with all, not forgetting his own servants ; he must keep his hands under control and not lose his temper at every trifle ; he must cultivate the justice and mercy that befit a ruler ; he must not wish for everything he sees, and he must learn to do without that which he cannot get by honest means ; he must not practise deceit, nor tell lies, nor pay attention to slander and evil speaking ; he must eat and drink nicely and in moderation ; in view of his love of riding, he must choose good horses."

The children played a very prominent part in the family life of the Sforzas. Both the Duke and Duchess were genuinely interested in their education. At Christmas and other high days and holidays they would recite poetry to their father or deliver one of the speeches that were an unfailing source of delight. These were generally in praise of their father or mother. They also appear to have been well trained in the courtly compliments of the day. Once, when Francesco admonished them to ply their books, they answered that they would do anything to be worthy of "his divine merits and his Herculean deeds and his heavenly virtues". When they came home after being out to amuse themselves, they were not allowed to go to bed till they had bidden their father good-night. In 1457 a gentleman of Navarre told Agnese

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del Maino that their manners and intelligence would have done credit to grown-up people of twenty, a compliment which need not, perhaps, be taken at its face value.

The children and their mother moved frequently from one of their castles in the Duchy to another and they stayed with some of the great nobles. But Pavia was their real home. The great red-brick castle of Milan, with its battlements and tower rose rapidly, if fitfully, for Francesco's need of money often compelled him to raid its funds. It was not made into a ducal residence under Francesco. The old Corte d'Arengo was small and not in good repair. Filippo Maria Visconti had never used it, but it "was restored to health" by the great architect Filarete, and he assures us that "without this restoration it would have quickly passed away". Sforza called in the best Lombard painters of the day to cover its walls with frescoes and it is easy to imagine the difference their brilliant colours made to the gloomy walls of these old castles. Chief among these was Vincenzo Foppa, the best master of the early Lombard school. Others were Bonifaccio Bembo and Cristoforo Moretti. In one of the courts there was a curious collection of heroes who may embody the Duke's own taste—Aeneas, Hector, Hercules, Attila, Charlemagne and Azzo Visconti, founder of the dynasty. In another, the Sala dei Baroni Armati, were portraits of the chief condottieri of the day, his friends and rivals. When the Corte d'Arengo had been suitably repaired, the family was more often in Milan. Not a vestige of this palace remains to-day.

The Ospedale Maggiore is the most notable monument of Francesco Sforza in Milan. It was a perpetual source of interest to the Ducal pair. The foundation stone was laid with great ceremony in 1456, the Marquis of Mantua, then on a visit, taking part in it, together with the Sforza family, the ambassadors and

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all the leading nobles and citizens. Filarete, the Florentine, the Duke's favourite architect, was in charge of the building, which was in the red brick of Lombardy, and the design became the model for many others of the kind in Italy. The wards were arranged in the form of a cross with an altar in the centre, so that all the patients could hear Mass at the same time. The cloisters round the quadrangles thus formed were decorated with frescoes. Foppa was responsible for those in the chief colonnade, which consisted of scenes of the foundation, including the presentation of a model to Pius II.

Pavia was the real home of the family. Like Windsor or Fontainebleau, it was within easy reach of the capital. Here they entertained their distinguished guests and here Bianca Maria liked to live while her husband was away fighting. The park had suffered sadly during the wars, when Piccinino played havoc with it, and Francesco restocked it with game. He had the passion of his day for hawking. There is a beautifully illuminated manuscript, written expressly for him, on the subject, in the library of the Duc d'Aumole. In Milan he kept twenty-two falconers and he also had a well-filled kennel. The library was a source of pardonable pride and perpetual interest to the Duke. Visitors were much impressed. Some of them actually went down on their knees on entering, while a learned and distinguished Carmelite said that the sight of it gave him greater pleasure than that of the Holy Sepulchre itself. Francesco would, on occasion, make presents of books. The beautiful illuminations in some manuscripts he gave Charles VII of France drew from that monarch the remark that they were the best he had ever seen. At Pavia was the armoury and here the artillery was made.

The family life was very simple, especially in their country homes such as Vigevano. Bianca Maria took René d'Anjou round the churches of Pavia on foot.

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The Duke often rode or walked in the streets of Milan, greeting the people by name, on his way to visit the work upon the castle or the hospital or the churches under construction. A letter of his to his heir, written from the Corte d'Arengo, brings out the simplicity of their way of life as well as anything. He bids him not to appear with his guest, the Marquis of Mantua, on Saturday, when the women would be washing (i.e. dyeing) their hair and the servants busy, but stay the night at Lodi and come on Sunday, when "*la brigata sarà in festa*".

So excellent a father and friend was naturally a good master. He never forgot his old soldiers, hailing them by name when he saw them in the street; he even remembered the names of their horses. His confidential secretary was Francesco Simonetta—Cicco, as he was called. He was a Calabrian, nephew of the Angelo Simonetta who had entered Francesco's service when he married Polissena Ruffo. Possibly he was one of her family retainers. When his uncle died, Cicco had succeeded him. He and his brother, Giovanni, whose Latin life is the best account we have of the Duke, had thus spent all their lives in his service. It was but natural that Cicco should have his master's complete confidence and hardly less natural that the Milanese should be jealous, notably men like Gaspare da Vimercate, who had been the chief instruments in securing Francesco the duchy. Gaspare was merely giving expression to the general feeling when he ventured to protest against Cicco's influence, suggesting that nothing would win the Duke greater popularity than to dismiss him. Sforza answered that, if he did, he should have to have another Cicco in place of him, even if he had to make him himself out of wax. There is no evidence that Cicco abused his influence.

Sforza, by the way, unlike the Visconti, had a profound contempt for astrology, though his own

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sense and experience enabled him to predict the results of his battles with astonishing accuracy. Once, when asked by an astrologer for the hour and date of his birth, he said he did not know. He had better ask his secretary, who had it written down.

CHAPTER VI

GALEAZZO MARIA SFORZA

GALEAZZO MARIA was still in France when he received the news of his father's death from his mother, who bade him take horse and fly back without a moment's delay. The end had come suddenly on March 8th, 1466. Needless to say, Bianca Maria, "donna di animo virile", rose to the occasion. Her passionate grief—she refused to leave her husband's body till it was taken out for burial—probably helped to secure her hold upon Milan, where she was at least as much beloved as Francesco. The sorrow was widespread: Milan felt that it had lost not only an excellent prince, says Cagnola, but a most merciful—Corio says *rispettabilissimo*—father. Bianca Maria had at once summoned the Council and the chief magnates of the city and bidden them in a suitable speech take every precaution for ensuring order. Though her grief was so manifest that it moved her hearers to tears, she did not break down; indeed, it was primarily to her that Galeazzo owed the preservation of his state and the absence of any kind of disturbance. Mindful of recent events, Florence and Naples prepared, in the interests of Italy as a whole, to step in to preserve order, if necessary, while Louis XI showed his friendship for the dead Duke and his gratitude for his generous assistance by writing to his "very dear and much loved aunt" that he would stand by her family as if it were his own.

Galeazzo took the precaution of dressing in the garb of a Milanese merchant on his way through Piedmont. Yet at Novalesse, at the foot of the Mont Cenis, he was attacked by the peasantry and forced to

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flee for sanctuary to the Church. In his suite was Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, one of the young nobles who had been brought up with him. During the war he had covered himself with glory by defeating in a duel a couple of French soldiers who were boasting of their victory over two Italians who had accepted their challenge. He proved himself invaluable on this occasion.

Here Galeazzo Maria was obliged to remain for three days, when he was rescued at night by the authorities from Turin, and sent on his way. The ringleader in the attack was an abbot, who had hoped to make capital out of a prize so valuable. Galeazzo reached home in safety, being at Abbiategrasso twelve days after his father's death. He left the castle there on a black horse with the chief members of his court : a number of people of importance came out from Milan to greet him, including the ambassadors and his own brothers. When he reached the gates of the city he doffed his mourning, put on the ducal robes and cap of white damask, took the baton and sword, all of which had been sent him by his mother, and mounted a different horse. Entering Milan in triumph with some 2,000 cavalry, he was swept towards the Cathedral by the huge, cheering crowd and then, after he had dismounted, up the aisle. When the service was over, he saluted his father's body, which was lying in state by the High Altar, with all signs of respect and embraced his brothers with tears. After visiting the church of S. Ambrogio, he entered the Corte d'Arengo by the door used by his father. There he rested a while and once more put on mourning. Then he went to the castle, where was his mother in deep mourning, plunged in grief. She flung herself into his arms and remained there sobbing for a quarter of an hour. After a moving scene he withdrew to his father's apartments.¹

¹ Magnani, *Relazioni Private*, etc. Doc. 50.

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As soon as his authority was firmly established, Galeazzo Maria began to take seriously in hand the negotiations for his marriage with Bona of Savoy, whom it had been his intention to visit at the French court. The descriptions of the bride are interesting. The ambassador wrote to Bianca Maria, "For the space of more than half an hour I was with the said Queen, but for the space of more than half an hour I kept my eye upon her sister, who could not gaze at me enough. . . . Some of the principal gentlemen of the Queen urged me to stare at her as much as I liked and treat her without the least ceremony. I thanked them, laughing heartily, saying I was there merely to see the Queen." He found Bona a very beautiful lady, but he only saw her front view. The description from Galeazzo's brother Tristano, who went to Amboise as his proxy for the marriage in 1468, is the most minute. He writes (March 23rd): "First and foremost she seems to me to have a beautiful figure, well suited for child-bearing, then a face neither long, nor broad, beautiful eyes, though they might be darker, a good nose and mouth, a lovely neck, good teeth and hands; above all, she has the most gentle and winning manners." All observers agree in praising her winning manners. The marriage took place at Amboise on May 10th. Tristano duly reported the fulfilment of the ceremony, when following custom, he touched the bride's thigh in bed with his leg.

Bona preferred not to travel through the territory of her brother, Amadeo IX, who was on the verge of war with Milan and had not even been consulted about the marriage. She reached Genoa looking rather peaked after a bad crossing from Marseilles, and insisted on entering the town on foot. Here she was met by Ludovico, who welcomed her with a kiss on the mouth and wrote in praise of her to his brother. Galeazzo met her at Novi and carried her off to Vigevano. There were no guests of importance as

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plague was raging in Milan. Bona had no dowry and Louis XI had suggested that Galeazzo might seize Vercelli from Savoy. Hostilities were begun, but the fighting was half-hearted and peace was soon made; indeed, it quickly developed into an alliance.

The upbringing of the young Duke—he was twenty-two when his father died—had done nothing to check his natural fondness for luxury. There was an end of the simplicity of the older generation. He had the splendid tastes of the full Renaissance, which was approaching its zenith and to which the art of the world is so deeply indebted. There was still a touch of austerity about Alfonso of Aragon, Francesco Sforza, and Cosimo dei Medici which found no echo in Lorenzo, still less in Galeazzo Maria.

It was Galeazzo Maria who set about converting the Castello di Porta Giovia, which, restored as it is to-day, is one of the great monuments of Milan, into a residence for himself and his bride. Their married life in the capital began in almost idyllic simplicity in the Casino in the park, next to the hen-house, on an island.

But Galeazzo was determined to spend the Christmas of the next year, 1469, in the Castello. The great, bare halls afforded little chance for comfort and it is not surprising to find him ordering one of them to be lined with wood to keep out the draughts. He had been obliged to borrow hangings and arras from his nobles for the reception of his bride. The windows of the Ducal apartments then had no view over the park, owing to the high defensive wall, and they were filled with linen, which was often torn. But the scale upon which he wished things to be done is shown by the fact that he ordered stabling for eighty-two horses for his wife alone. As the halls must be painted with frescoes in time, the painters had to work day and night. The castle was always strictly guarded, but the Duke issued special orders that the painters should

be admitted after dark, "provided that they have with them no arms, only their implements".

The Duke had the passion of the day for hunting and hawking. His ambassadors soon found out that nothing gave him greater pleasure than the gift of a rare falcon or dog or bird. He was also fond of the Italian ball game of *pallone* and would never grudge money to entice good players to Milan.

Bianca Maria was a masterful woman and probably instinctively asserted herself—and her authority was everywhere very great—more than ever after her husband's death. For about a year she ruled jointly with Galeazzo. But though he did not possess the strength of character of either of his parents, he had plenty of vanity and was the last person to submit to tutelage. Strong, masculine, finely tempered characters like his father and grandfather, who had not quite shaken off the primitive simplicity of their peasant ancestors, would have been able to carry on with Bianca Maria without quarrelling with her. Galeazzo, however, was headstrong and ill-balanced. Like his brothers, he was more of a Visconti than a Sforza, both for good and for evil. Whatever his faults, he was lacking neither in intelligence, nor in administrative ability. The growing breach between mother and son was widened by the appearance of Bona upon the scenes. Bianca Maria was not one to be content with the second place, so she decided to retire to her own town of Cremona. This was in October. She had not got further than Melegnano when she was taken seriously ill and died, in the presence of Galeazzo. The circumstances of her death were unfortunate for the young Duke. She was much loved in Milan and the fact that he had quarrelled with his mother would, in any case, have done not a little to diminish any affection felt for him by many of his people. It is not surprising that a rumour got abroad that he had poisoned her, a charge for which there is not the

slightest foundation. The chroniclers tell of a great comet appearing in the sky and vanishing in the courtyard of the castle at the time of her death—"in witness of her excellent goodness" (Cagnola)—as well as of her receiving the last rites of the Church through the chance visit of a number of monks, one of whom had known her long, for she was a woman of deep piety, when her doctors did not dare tell her how grave was her illness. She left Galeazzo Cremona, but the revenues from it were to be equally divided between him and his brothers. She particularly commended to him her Milanese and the rest of her subjects, thus making it plain that she looked upon them as her own people.

Galeazzo showed his wisdom by following in his father's footsteps in his foreign policy. He firmly adhered to the Triple Alliance, with Florence and Naples, as a counterpoise to the danger of the encroachments of Venice, generally backed by the Papacy. The bond was tightened in 1469 on the birth of a son and heir, who was christened Gian Galeazzo, after the great Visconti Duke. Lorenzo dei Medici stood godfather to the boy as proxy for his father, and, much against his father's will, came to Milan for the ceremony. He says in his *Memoirs*, "I was received with great honour, more so than the others who came for the same purpose, though they were persons more worthy than I. We paid our duty to the Duchess by presenting her with a necklace of gold with a large diamond that cost nearly 2,000 ducats. The result was that the said Lord desired that I should be godfather to all his children"; and, in fact, he was.

This was also the year in which Galeazzo Maria was solemnly recognized as Duke and invested with the insignia by the people of Milan. He had put off the ceremony in the hope of receiving the imperial investiture, and holding the title on the same footing as the Visconti. Early in 1469 the Emperor Frederic III

visited Italy, but he refused ever to admit the Milanese ambassadors who had been sent to him at Ferrara to his presence. Such were the feelings of the other towns in the Duchy towards Milan, that Galeazzo had to go to Vigevano to receive the homage of their representatives.

Galeazzo loyally supported his allies when the Venetians under Colleoni attacked Florence, appearing himself in the field ; but, though he had no lack of courage, he was not a trained soldier. The wily Federico d'Urbino, who was commanding the allies and had all the prudence of the Sforzeschi, was obliged to get him out of the way before attempting serious military operations. Fighting with Colleoni and the Venetians was Galeazzo's own uncle, Alessandro of Pesaro, as well as his half-brother, Sforza, who had revolted against his father. The allies waited till the Duke of Milan had been summoned to Florence on the pretext of there being important business to discuss. Roberto Sanseverino commanded the Milanese during his absence. A terrific battle ensued. When the fighting had been carried on after dark for two hours by torchlight, Federico shouted to his father-in-law, Alessandro of Pesaro : " O Signor mio padre, we have had enough for to-day " ; to which Alessandro answered, " That is for you to decide ", and they called off their men. Over 300 men and more than 400 horses were killed, an appalling slaughter for condottiere warfare. But at least the battle resulted in terms being agreed to, each side remaining *statu quo*.

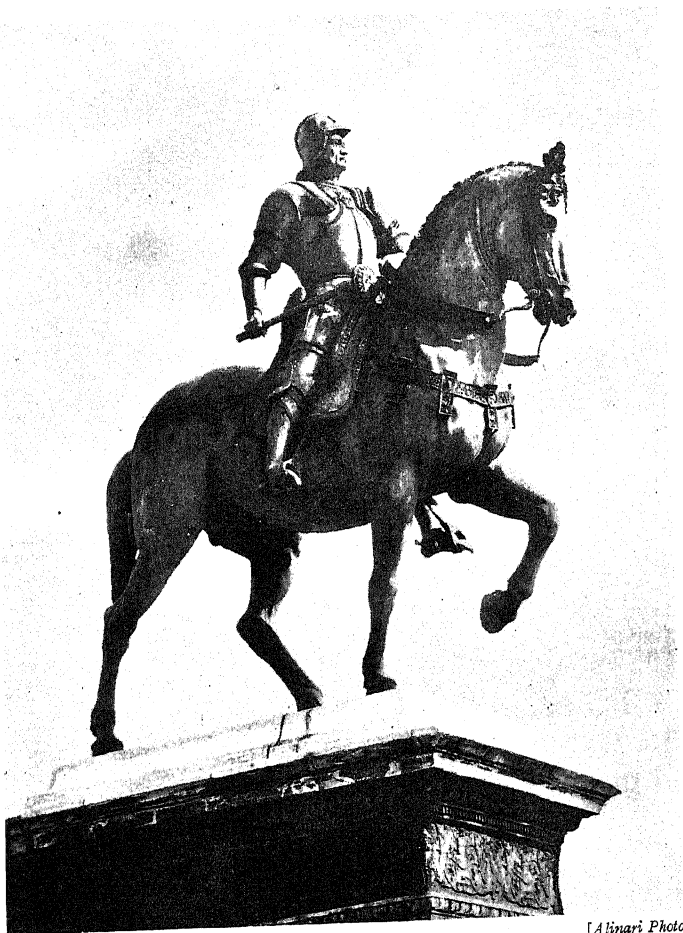
Galeazzo was furious when he heard that they had fought during his absence. On his return from Florence he expressed a great desire to see Colleoni. A meeting was therefore arranged between uncle and nephew and the famous Bergamasc captain. Galeazzo vented his feelings upon Federico d'Urbino. When he appeared in Milan, he abused him roundly for not

pressing the advantage he had gained to victory and, according to Corio, he threatened to have off his head. However, Cicco Simonetta, an old friend, gave him timely warning and he escaped to Urbino. Not that it is conceivable that Galeazzo would have ventured to carry out his threat.

In love of lavish display Galeazzo Maria had no rival, even during the Renaissance. The great majority of the notes from him given by Porro¹ are concerned with the supply of cloths and stuffs for the various members of his household. In this respect the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Milan to Florence in 1471 is famous, even in the annals of the Renaissance. Though no lover of Galeazzo Maria, Corio revels in it, saying that, for magnificence, there had been nothing to equal it within the memory of man. Galeazzo may have hoped in this way to allay any ill feeling that might have arisen among the Medici on account of his having given Imola to the Riarii. Ostensibly he went to pay a vow at the Church of the Annunciata at Florence. The visit took place in May. The chief Court officials had been supplied with cloth of gold and silver and their households were all in their best. The Duke's own household was resplendent with velvet and silk. To twenty of them he had given gold chains, the least being valued at 100 ducats. Even the kitchen staff was in velvet and silk. With him were fifty horses, the saddles of cloth of gold, the stirrups plaited with silk, the metal parts being gilded. These gorgeous steeds were ridden by lads in doublets of cloth of gold and silk.

There were also a dozen *carretti*, which had been brought over the mountains on mules. Bandello describes these rather primitive carriages, when he expatiates upon the great days of Duke Ludovico in Novella 9. So splendid was the dress of the women then, he assures us, that, when one came to the door,

¹ *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1878.



[Alinari Photo]

BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI
By Verrocchio

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you might imagine yourself at the Ascension Day celebrations in Venice; and there were numbers of *carretti*, some drawn by four, many by two horses, their covers ornamented with silk and gold fringes. The coachman rode on the horses. The cushions of those with the Duke were of the eternal cloth of gold and silver or crimson satin and even the horses were covered with silk trappings. There were 2,000 horses and 200 baggage mules, with coverings of white and brown damask bearing the ducal arms and edged with gold and silver. Galeazzo also took with him 500 dogs of different kinds and a number of hawks and falcons. Such displays were expected of a great prince during the Renaissance. When Borso d'Este went to Rome in 1471 he had with him eighty pages, each with two couples of hounds, belonging to the famous d'Este breed. Galeazzo also brought forty pipers and taborers and a number of buffoons and others who played instruments. The total cost was computed at 200,000 ducats. The mere possibility of such a display is proof of the wealth of Milan.

They were met on the road by the chief notables of Florence and by companies of youths. "Afterwards came the matrons of the lovely city, then girls singing verses in praise of the most excellent prince, then the magistrates and lastly the Senate, who presented the Prince with the keys of the city of Florence, which they entered in unheard of triumph." They were lodged in the palace of Piero di Cosimo dei Medici, while the other members of the suite were entertained by different citizens. Lorenzo did the honours and Galeazzo was bound to admit, as he readily did, the superiority of the art collections of the Florentine. The worth lay in their intrinsic artistic beauty, not in the monetary value of their material, as was the case with his own.

Three Sacred Representations were given in honour of the guests. During the one that showed the descent

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of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in the Church of S. Spirito the flames of the tongues set fire to the building. People thought, says Machiavelli, that this was a sign of the wrath of God, because the Ducal party ate meat all through Lent, like unbelievers. The city was much gratified when Galeazzo gave 2,000 ducats towards covering the loss, a sum which stimulated the rapid rise of the new church that was being built by no less an architect than Brunelleschi. The Duke was systematically lavish during this visit, giving ducats to those who presented him with a few flowers. His suite also obeyed religiously his strict injunctions to behave with the utmost decorum. Machiavelli holds that the visit had a disastrous effect in increasing luxury and extravagance in Florence. "If the Duke found the city of Florence filled with courtly delicacy and manners and customs that accorded ill with a well ordered civilization, he left it far worse."

He went on to Lucca, where he was received with every honour, and then to Genoa. Here, unfortunately, he chose to show his worst side. The Visconti nerves asserted themselves. He was splendidly lodged in the Doge's palace and the great city was preparing to entertain him to the best of its power. But after dining with the Doge, excusing himself by saying that he wished to take a walk, he made his way straight to the castle with his wife and the principal members of his suite; nor did he leave it for the whole five days of his visit. The city was deeply offended by this obvious lack of trust. However, Genoa duly presented him with a bowl containing 25,000 Genoese ducats, while the Duchess was given some valuable silks and hangings.

The election of the Riario Pope, Sixtus IV, in 1471, which the Duke had done his best to promote, had important consequences for Milan owing to his shameless nepotism towards "the two whom he called

his nephews", as Corio puts it, but who were probably his sons. Imola in Romagna had been ceded to Milan by Galeotto Manfredi of Faenza with the idea of its being purchased by Florence. But it was a Papal fief and Sixtus made overtures to the Duke with a view to securing it for his nephew, Girolamo Riario. Galeazzo was glad of a chance of increasing his influence with the Papacy and it was agreed that the deal should be cemented by the betrothal of the Duke's natural daughter, Caterina Sforza, who was to become one of the best known women of the Renaissance, to Girolamo. The Pope grumbled at the price, 40,000 ducats, but he understood that a daughter of the Duke of Milan would not expect to live like a simple private citizen and he consented. At the time of her betrothal she was only eleven.

Galeazzo had an excellent opportunity for indulging his taste for display when the worthless brother of his future son-in-law, Cardinal Pietro Riario, came to Milan in 1473. Shortly after his succession, in 1468, he had had a memorandum drawn up for his guidance upon the etiquette to be observed in receiving ambassadors according to their different ranks.¹ The Cardinal had just been entertaining Leonora d'Aragona, the daughter of the King of Naples and the bride of Ercole d'Este, with a reckless extravagance that suggests the Arabian Nights. Galeazzo received him with as much splendour as if he had been the Pope himself, the blare of the trumpets, says Corio, as he entered the city with the Duke, almost rending the air. It was said that the Cardinal promised to persuade the Pope to make Galeazzo King of Lombardy, while Galeazzo undertook to support him as a candidate for the Papacy on the death of Sixtus. Pietro Riario then went to Venice. On his return to Rome he paid the penalty for his way of life, which was a match for his extravagance, by an early death, "to the great grief of

¹ It is given in *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1890.

the Pope and the joy of the cardinals ". The epigrams upon him were as scathing as any that appeared during the Renaissance, but his very extravagance made him popular with the mob. It was, of course, said that he had been given poison in Venice.

This love of display cost money. The Milanese enjoyed it thoroughly till they were called upon to pay the bill. The order that the streets of Milan should be paved by the city instead of at the Duke's expense in 1469 caused loud murmurs, as did the steady growth of the taxes, from which the clergy were no longer exempted.

The descriptions of the visit to Florence show that the Milanese court was already one of the most magnificent in Italy and the Duke was continually enlarging it. Thus in 1474, at Christmas—an unusually important festival with the Dukes of Milan—a hundred new officials were appointed at a salary of 100 ducats. Forty of them, dressed in the Sforza brown, were assigned to the Duchess, the others who wore crimson, to the Duke. Among them was Corio's father, while the historian was himself one of the hundred new pages.

Foreign princes were entertained splendidly, for the Duke delighted in doing the honours, especially at Pavia. Among them appears the quaint and patriarchal figure of the King of Dacia, who was on his way home from a pilgrimage to the shrine of S. Iago de Campostella. Galeazzo went to meet him as far as the Church of S. Jacopo, outside Pavia. The venerable old gentleman, with his long beard and white hair, was shown all the wonders of the castle, the library, the astonishing collection of relics made by Giangaleazzo Visconti, and even the treasure ; for, in spite of his love of luxury, the Duke always kept an ample treasure by him in case of accidents. The gold is said to have then been worth a million and the pearls nearly as much. The king, through an

interpreter, said that it was unbecoming for a prince to hoard money in such a way ; perhaps that is why he willingly accepted a loan of 10,000 ducats. He was taken to Milan in a carriage drawn by four white horses. Later on Galeazzo sent an agent with a well-filled purse to buy horses from him. As soon as the old rascal heard of his late host's murder, he not only seized the money, but was only persuaded to release the agent with the utmost difficulty.

Galeazzo liked his court to be considered the most splendid in Europe. His horses and dogs were unrivalled. Even the perches of his hawks and falcons were covered in velvet, edged with gold and silver, and adorned with the Sforza arms. He lavished money on Pavia, of which he was very fond, decorating the walls with the brilliant frescoes recording the court life of the day that were then fashionable. In addition to hunting scenes and pictures of great ceremonies, in which all the leading personalities of the court featured, there were frescoes of his marriage with Bona and of his state entry into important towns.

His choir was his special hobby. Fond of singing himself, he spared neither pains nor money to ensure its being of the best. He had twenty-two choristers and eighteen *cantori da camera*. In 1476 they cost 5,000 ducats and he was almost as particular about their dress as about their voices. We find him sending his singer, Gaspare, to Picardy and Flanders in search of recruits, bidding him bring ten good sopranos, a high tenor like Bovis, a tenor like Peroto and two counterbasses. The Low Countries then produced the finest singers. Even the terrors of his anger could not control the weaknesses of the artistic temperament. In 1475 he sent special orders to a lute-player and a viol-player to put in an appearance. On no account must they be drunk. For the rest of the year they can be as drunk as they like, provided they are sober

on this occasion.¹ Were these toppers recruited in the more bibulous North?

Galeazzo also took great pride in the uniforms of his guards with their huge plumed helmets and the ceremony of the blessing of the standards on S. George's Day was, perhaps, the most gorgeous of the year. In 1475 there were ordered 1,205 cloaks for it, either of velvet or of crimson cloth, embroidered with Sforza devices. The standards were blessed in the Duomo in the presence of the whole court. A great tournament was the special feature of the day. The handsome Duke naturally outshone everyone else at Milan in the splendour of his raiment, for he was vain to a degree and particularly proud of the white hands he had inherited from his mother.

Yet he was cultivated and a man of no small parts, as even his enemies admitted, and, says Corio, more elegant in his speech than any other prince. One remembers his youthful orations. "With his intimates he was amusing, affable, friendly and he readily granted audiences to his subjects", thus maintaining the democratic traditions of his father, in which the Sforzas may be compared with their friends, the Medici. He also appreciated and encouraged learning, as became a Renaissance prince. He added to the great library at Pavia and invited scholars to settle at Milan or Pavia and teach in the universities. It was due in no small measure to his encouragement that the press was set up at Milan where Lascaris's Greek Grammar, the first Greek book to appear in Italy, was printed in 1476. Cagnola describes him as "very handsome, with a beautiful figure, of quick and clear brain, a lover of justice, generous in giving; he governed his people with wisdom and kept them at peace." He promoted trade and agriculture in every possible way. It was in his reign that rice was first grown in Lombardy and he did much to encourage

¹ Morbio, pp. 409 and 454.

the silk industry. It is worth remembering that in Milan, as in Florence, there was scarcely one of the great families that was not engaged in trade of some kind. The armourers of Milan were long without a rival in Europe.

In all this Galeazzo Maria was a Visconti as also in his vices, the worst of which had a distinct touch of Visconti madness about them. The one person who appears to have tyrannized over the tyrant of Milan was his favourite mistress, Lucia Marliani, a married woman of good family. He made her Countess of Melzo and gave her considerable estates, Melzo and Gorgonzola among them. In 1475 he wrote to Lorenzo dei Medici that he had doubtless heard of his *amorosa*, "whom I love more passionately every day, striving to do her every pleasure in my power"; and he begs him to give the bearer a certain pale ruby and not to refuse him this favour, adding that he shall be paid for it immediately. Gifts to the Countess are continually mentioned in his letters. When her relatives take advantage of his weakness to press their demands beyond all reason, he bids his steward try to put them off with promises and polite messages, but not to give him away. The decree making over to her a share in the profits of the Martisana canal begins, "The more we consider the innate good habits, the pure life and surpassing beauty of Lucia Marliani, the more are we compelled to love her alone. . . . To this we must add her singular devotion to ourselves and the burning passion which makes her daily dearer to us." The gift is only to remain in force so long as Lucia has no carnal connection with her husband, except by special permission in writing, or with any other man.¹ Dire threats are made against Bona should she attempt to interfere. The deed is signed by the Duke and by a number of prominent councillors and nobles of Milan. Orders for stuffs "*per certo nostro segreto*" are

¹ Morbio, p. 431.

doubtless for other ladies, for the Marliani is always referred to as the Countess and Galeazzo spread his favours as widely as other Renaissance princes. There is an order to procure a length of cloth of gold, similar to that ordered by the Duchess, and "send it as quickly as possible, doing it so that the Most Illustrious Duchess may know nothing about it".

Yet there is the story of the priest who refused to absolve the Marliani, which soon became popular. He was summoned to Vigevano and threatened with death, but refused to yield, and was packed off to Milan with a heap of abuse. Then Galeazzo turned to those round him and said in tones of admiration that he did not know that he had such a man in his dominions. A single action of this kind would outweigh a number of evil deeds in the eyes of the people.

Corio, who saw court life from the inside, tells some unpleasant stories of the Duke's cruelty, which has the degenerate savour of the worst of his Visconti ancestors. This side of his character so disgusted his early companion, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, that he thought of going to the Holy Land to escape. On one occasion he ordered an artist to finish painting a room with figures in a single night on pain of death. He did his work admirably and was well rewarded by Galeazzo. Once, in a fit of brutal callousness, he had his barber given three jerks with the strappado and then, after his arms had been dislocated, made him shave him at once. A peasant who had poached a hare in the park at Pavia was forced to eat it as it was, skin and all, with the result that he died. He once issued a decree that no one should dance in his own house at Pavia later than an hour after sunset on pain of death. When his jealousy was aroused by the sight of a man talking to one of his mistresses, he had him accused of forging a letter and both his hands cut off. Corio also has a very unpleasant tale of his punishment

of a handsome young man who insisted on living chastely. It is, of course, impossible to guarantee the truth of these stories, but there is no doubt that there was this queer Visconti strain in his character.

Yet Galeazzo had not the Visconti cowardice. He readily took the field, though he had not had a soldier's training. He was fond of *pallone*. Morbio gives an amusing letter in which he warns his brother, Ascanio, against playing *pallone* or chess with Count Belgioioso, as he is so good that he will always win, nor to lend him money.

The story of the death of Galeazzo Maria Sforza is extraordinarily interesting for the curious light it throws on the times. Corio gives a vivid account of it, which retains the freshness of his youthful impressions, for he was only a lad when he witnessed it. The Duke owed his violent end quite as much to Humanism, to the worship of the classical world and the hatred of tyrants it was supposed to inspire, as to any faults, or even crimes of his own. Among the Humanists in Milan was Cola Montano of Bologna, a very eloquent speaker, according to the taste of the day, and as vain, bitter and jealous as most of his kind. Some authorities say that Galeazzo had been his pupil and been beaten by him and that, on coming to power, the Duke had Cola publicly whipped and that this was the cause of his hatred. But the story is doubtful. To the lads who attended his classes Cola was continually denouncing tyrants, saying that life could be happy only under a Republic, and that only under a Republic did great men flourish or was glory possible. He was always holding up the tyrant-slayers, such as Brutus and even Catiline, as models. Girolamo Olgiati describes how, while he and Cola were watching the Duke leaving the Corte d'Arengo in full state, Cola turned indignantly to him, bidding him not to follow such examples, but to remember the great deeds of the Carthaginians. The man's whole attitude does suggest

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a personal grievance. Cola was ultimately expelled from Milan and appears to have gone to Naples, but the effects of his teaching remained.

The three conspirators were Andrea Lampugnani, Carlo Visconti and Girolamo Olgiati. Lampugnani was penniless. He had already got into trouble with Francesco Sforza and been condemned to death. Galeazzo Maria had pardoned him, but he had his grievance in being deprived, as he thought unjustly, of the revenues of a monastery. His one chance of retrieving his fortunes lay in a revolution. Carlo Visconti had not forgiven the Duke for seducing his sister. Girolamo Olgiati is the most interesting of the three. A visionary and fanatic, he had fallen completely under the spell of Cola, dreaming of freeing his country like Brutus or Harmodius and winning eternal fame as a leader in the glorious republic that should replace the tyrant, whose death would bring about the millennium.

Following the example of other conspirators, they decided that their best chance lay in choosing a church for the deed. Lampugnani seems to have been the leader. They met at night in an alley behind the church of S. Ambrogio, where they practised stabbing each other with their sheathed daggers.

Galeazzo Maria was at Vigevano, after a successful campaign in Piedmont. He had decided to come to Milan for Christmas as usual, but he was uneasy. A priest, who was an expert astrologer, had warned him, on being asked, that he would not reign eleven years. The man had been imprisoned with a loaf of bread, a glass of wine and the wing of a chicken and had died in twelve days; whereupon the angry Duke had pointed out that, since he had been unable to foretell his own death, no heed need be paid to his prophecy. A series of omens had only increased his presentiment of evil—the appearance of a comet, a fire in his own room at the castle of Milan, and, lastly, three ravens cawing just as he started upon the last lap of his

journey, from Abbiategrasso. So perturbed was he at the birds' appearance that he fired two shots at them, but without effect. For a moment he hesitated, leaning with his hands upon his saddle, but he ended by going on.

On reaching the capital he ordered his choir to dress in mourning and every day to sing a verse from the Office of the Dead during Mass. The burning of the Yule log on Christmas Eve, which had been a custom of the Visconti, was celebrated with no less ceremony by the Sforzas. Possibly the tradition had been handed down from the days of Lombard rule. The Duke went in full state to the Sala Verde, as usual, accompanied by his family and the whole court, to the sound of trumpets. Ludovico and Sforza were in France. Rumour said that they had been banished by Galeazzo, as he had discovered that they were plotting to murder him and seize the Duchy, but they appear to have proceeded thither of their own free will, from a desire to see the world; they were also to execute a mission for the Duke. Ascanio was in Rome and similar doubts were thrown upon him. These suspicions may well have arisen from their conduct after their brother's death. The log, gaily decorated with juniper and other greenery, was brought in by Filippo, Galeazzo's eldest brother, always a nonentity, and the youngest, Ottaviano, a mere boy, and thrown upon the fire amid great rejoicing. Afterwards there was dancing and feasting.

On Christmas Day the Duke, clad in a scarlet robe, heard the three Masses in the Castle chapel and then went to the Sala delle Colombe, which was decorated with Bona's favourite doves on a red ground. He began, rather ominously, to sing the praises of his House, saying that he and his brothers would always have known how to live splendidly, had they not been princes, and that their numerous children guaranteed the succession for many years. Then followed a

family dinner. The rest of the day he spent flying his hawks in the park or Barco.

The next day, S. Stephen's Day, was bitterly cold. The Duke put on a breastplate, then took it off, saying that it made him look too fat. He chose a crimson cloak, lined with ermine. The silk belt was the Sforza brown, as were the hat and left stocking, the other being white. The privilege of wearing a white and a brown stocking belonged to the Sforzas and was sometimes granted to others as a mark of favour. Bona had had a bad dream and begged him to hear Mass in the Castle instead of following the custom of going to S. Stefano. But the chaplain had gone on with the chalices and the Bishop of Como was unwell. So, says Corio, who was at court, "he decided to go and there he was awaited by the conspirators to strike him dead and also by some of his mistresses and by certain women, whom I do not name for decency, who had been ordered to go thither by the Duke." He sent for his sons, Gian Galeazzo and Ermes, and placed them on each side of the window where he was standing and kissed them, as if he could not tear himself away from them. Obviously moved, he went out and mounted his horse; it was too cold, it is said, to walk. Corio took a short cut on foot, arriving before the Ducal party at the church. There to his surprise, for they should have been at court, he saw Olgiati and Lampugnani arm in arm, wearing short cloaks of crimson satin.

The conspirators had met and once more renewed their oaths on Christmas evening. In the morning they went to S. Stefano and prayed the Protomartyr Stephen to bless their great and holy undertaking and forgive them for desecrating his church with blood, since that blood would restore liberty to Milan. This strange prayer had been composed for the occasion by Carlo Visconti and they recited it with the other ritual prayers for the saint. They heard Mass. They

returned to the church betimes, but went into the room of the archpriest, a friend of theirs, as it was so cold and in order not to attract attention. The shouts of the crowd, which was larger than usual, owing to the long absence of the Duke, warned them of his approach. Lampugnani and Olgiati stationed themselves on the right, wearing cuirasses and armed with long daggers, with some of the dregs of the populace round them, whom they had hired and armed. Visconti was on the left. The Duke dismounted and threw the reins to his Moorish groom. Most of his suite went in front. After them came the guard, then the grooms, who were endeavouring to keep back the crowd and make a way for him, then the Duke himself between the ambassadors of Mantua and Ferrara. Lampugnani pretended to help clear the way, then dropped on one knee, as if to present a petition, at the same time giving the Duke two mortal wounds with the dagger he had hidden in his sleeve, one in the belly, another in the throat. Olgiati struck him on the left breast, the throat and the wrist, while Visconti also stabbed him three times from behind. They had done their work thoroughly. Galeazzo fell dead, exclaiming : " O Nostra Donna ! " One of the *bravi* also struck at him and killed a groom, but the other lackeys and guards drew and fell upon the murderers with such fury that it seemed as if they would bring the church down. Visconti was soon killed.

In those days the women, of whom there were an unusually large number present, appear to have sat upon the floor of the church. Lampugnani, who had a horse waiting outside, darted among them in the hope of escaping, but he was pursued by the Duke's own gigantic Moorish lackey and, stumbling among the women's dresses, was cut down and killed. His body was dragged about the streets for the rest of the day by boys and horribly mangled. The women

rushed for the door, but were relieved of their jewellery and other finery by a number of miscreants in the confusion. In a few hours the heads of the conspirators and their assistants, who had been hung, drawn and quartered, were displayed upon the Broletto Nuovo.

Olgiati alone escaped. Hardly able to believe that there had not been universal rejoicing at the death of the tyrant, followed by a return to liberty that should usher in the millennium, he made for his home. His family would have nothing to do with him. His father turned him out and threatened to kill him. Moved by his mother's prayers a priest took pity on him and concealed him for a couple of days. As he lay in hiding, he dreamt of leading the mob to sack the houses of Cicco and other myrmidons of the tyrant, promising that there should be no more heavy taxes, if they would deprive the nobles of power and seize the government. He could not imagine that the murder had filled the whole city with horror and that the murderers were universally execrated.

Olgiati was recognized while trying to escape in disguise. Of his sins he repented, but not of the murder, in spite of all the tortures, saying that he believed that it would bring him forgiveness for his sins. He was twenty-two. When the executioner was beginning to open his breast with the blunt knife, he exclaimed, "*Collige te, Hieronime : stabit vetus memoria facti. Mors acerba, fama perpetua*"—"Pull yourself together, Jerome: the memory of your deed will live long. Your death is untimely, but your fame everlasting." His detailed description of the conspiracy, written after appalling tortures, is a most interesting document. Corio gives it in the original Latin.

Bona sent down to the church two rings and a seal and a robe of cloth of gold in which Galeazzo had expressed a wish to be buried and he was duly buried

in the Duomo without any ceremony. The murder soon found its way into legend and Olgiati especially became something of a hero in popular poetry.

Bona was much troubled about the fate of her husband's soul. After consulting some leading theologians in Milan and gathering from them that such a step was permissible, she approached the Pope with a view to obtaining posthumous absolution for him. She said that she had loved Galeazzo more than anything else on earth, after God, but he had been engaged in many worldly matters, wars, licit and illicit, sacks, robberies and the like; extortions from subjects, neglect of justice and at times deliberate acts of injustice; impositions of fresh taxes without exemption of the clergy; carnal vices; notorious and scandalous simonies and other innumerable sins, though his prayers and confessions and signs of contrition led her to hope that he had died in a state of grace. She therefore prayed His Holiness to give him a bull of absolution, promising to make every possible reparation. If it is granted, she is willing to fast and wear a hair shirt and do any penance.¹ The Duchess would have preferred that such sums as she might give towards the atonement of her husband's sins should be used for the churches at Milan or the hospital, but the Pope insisted on gathering them into his own coffers. The story sheds an interesting light on the curiously materialistic and pagan religious outlook of the time.

¹ Pasolini, *C. Sforza*, Vol. III, p. 30.

CHAPTER VII

GIAN GALEAZZO SFORZA AND HIS UNCLE LUDOVICO

THE loyal Cicco now stepped into the first place as naturally as Bianca Maria had done on the death of Francesco. The Council was summoned at once and the eight-year-old Gian Galeazzo proclaimed Duke, his mother being appointed his guardian. A weak, if gentle and kindly, woman and *de petit sens*, as Commynes puts it, she leaned instinctively upon Cicco. As a precautionary measure troops were sent to the districts most likely to be disaffected. The late Duke's very unpopularity helped to smooth the path for the new government—an unpopularity due more to the heavy taxes than to his way of life, for the Milanese, as a whole, thoroughly enjoyed the splendours of the court. By abolishing some of these, more especially the hated grist tax, and ensuring a plentiful supply of bread, of which there was a shortage, all danger of a rising—and the horror felt for the murder shows that this was never great—was averted. The Milanese at least, apart from the provinces, had grown used to the dynasty and the failure of the Republic made them the more ready to accept the Sforzas as the legitimate successors of the Visconti. Once again the leading Italian states sent ambassadors to condole with the Duchess and offer support, if necessary. Sixtus IV especially promised to use every means in his power, both spiritual and temporal, to avert trouble.

As was to be expected, Sforza Maria and Ludovico came back post haste from France at the news of the murder of their brother, more anxious to assert their

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own authority than to put it at the disposal of the guardians of their nephew. They were anything but pleased to find Cicco installed as virtual ruler, nor was Cicco himself always tactful; at a later date he even occupied the Ducal apartments in the Rocchetta of the Castle: Bona they could dominate, but Cicco's age and experience, and above all his loyalty to his trust, made him a formidable obstacle. Acting as he knew Galeazzo Maria would have done, he refused to allow them to play an active part in the government as members of the Council, where they could have used their influence and intrigued against him, and they were by no means pleased at being nominated Presidents of the Council of Justice with no real power. They found ready support among the Milanese nobles, by whom Cicco was more hated than ever. Ascanio, Bishop of Pavia, now back from Rome, naturally sided with his brothers, as also did the youngest, the boy Ottaviano. Their avowed object was to get rid of Cicco and make Sforza Maria guardian.

Fortunately Ludovico Gonzaga, an old friend of the family, whom also Galeazzo Maria had made a guardian to his children in his will, came to Milan on a visit and succeeded, with the assistance of the Papal Legate, in bringing the parties to terms. The fine Torre di Bona di Savoia was added to the castle at this time, and Corio tells us that Gonzaga designed it. The brothers were established in palaces of their own in Milan, each receiving his share of the revenue from the city of Cremona, as their mother had willed. The eldest, Filippo—"uomo di non gravi imprese", as Corio well puts it—was a peaceful soul, entirely without the ambitions, the abilities and the shiftiness of the others. He retired readily to the palace given him, where he led a quiet life, playing no part in politics, and where he had the luck to die on the eve of the French invasion, which would have sadly disturbed his ease and tranquillity.

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But neither Sforza Maria, nor Ludovico, had any intention of settling down quietly. After recovering Genoa for the Duchy they began to plot against Cicco, with the powerful support of the condottiere Roberto di Sanseverino and Donato del Conte. They seem to have talked of making Ludovico Duke. Whereupon Cicco arrested and tortured Donato and, after extorting a full confession from him, imprisoned him in the castle of Monza. The conspirators demanded his release and when Bona, or rather Cicco, refused, they attempted a rising. But public opinion was on the side of the Government and they were obliged to surrender. Sanseverino fled. He ensured his escape by a clever ruse. Knowing who would be sent in pursuit, he ordered the castellan of the first important castle on his route to arrest him, should he appear there, as he himself had been sent in pursuit of him. Sanseverino was welcomed at the French court, where several of his Neapolitan relatives had taken refuge from the tyranny of King Ferrante. Ottaviano Sforza also fled. On approaching the River Adda, which was in flood, he noticed some men behind him, one of whom was wearing a Sforza doublet. Thinking he was being pursued, he plunged into the river and was swept away by the current and drowned. The other brothers were banished from Lombardy, Sforza Maria to his duchy of Bari, Ludovico to Pisa and Ascanio to Perugia. Shortly afterwards Donato was killed by a fall while attempting to escape from Monza.

The war that followed the conspiracy of the Pazzi against the Medici, in which Giuliano was murdered, though Lorenzo escaped, ended disastrously for Milan, which supported Florence, as a member of the Triple Alliance. She lost Genoa and was badly defeated by the Swiss, who had attacked Bellinzona at the request of Ferrante and the Pope, in order to draw off the Lombard forces from assisting Florence. The Sforza

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uncles took the opposite side. Encouraged by Ferrante, they left their places of exile in 1479 and advanced into Florentine territory. When peace was made, they were joined by Roberto Sanseverino. They issued a proclamation to the effect that, with the help of the Pope and the King of Naples, they were going to deliver the Duke and Duchess from the clutches of Cicco Simonetta and reform the grievances of Milan.

In July Sforza Maria died very suddenly, "some say by poison, some from his excessive corpulence", remarks Corio; whereupon Ferrante conferred the Duchy of Bari upon Ludovico. By a rapid march through difficult country the new Duke of Bari surprised Tortona, which surrendered to him, as did other towns in the neighbourhood, welcoming him joyously.

The leading Ghibelline nobles in Milan, men like Pietro Pusterla, Giovanni Borromeo or Antonio Marliani, were only too ready, such was their hatred of the Calabrian upstart, to side with the rebel. Supported by her Seneschal, Pietro Landriano, and by other members of the Council, they endeavoured to win Bona to their views. This was not as difficult as it had been. Weak and yielding, she had fallen completely under the influence of a young man called Antonio Tassino, from Ferrara, whom her husband had made her carver. He is said to have had charming manners and to have been of good birth, though opinions differ as to his looks. Such was his ascendancy over the Duchess that, much to the disgust of Cicco, there was no state secret of which he was not informed. Commynes says that she rode about Milan with him on a pillion and spent her time in dancing and other amusements. Tassino was eager to see his enemy removed from power and warmly advocated a reconciliation with Ludovico. Nothing else could put an effectual end to the civil war.

The upshot was that Ludovico, leaving his army in charge of Roberto Sanseverino, was admitted to the castle by the garden entrance, taken privately to the apartments of the Duke and Duchess, and completely reconciled with them without Simonetta knowing anything of what was going forward. There was much rejoicing among the great nobles. On hearing what had happened, Cicco said to his mistress: "Most Illustrious Duchess, I shall lose my head and you, in due course, your state." The prophecy turned out to be only too true.

However, Cicco set about winning Ludovico's favour by treating him in the most friendly way possible. He must have held him in his arms when a child and a young man of Ludovico's rather weak nature could hardly help feeling the force of his character, which would be strengthened by early associations; moreover, he had always at heart been more of a Guelf than a Ghibelline. So successful was Cicco that the Ghibellines who had brought about the reconciliation became alarmed. A combination of Cicco and Ludovico was the last thing they desired. They appealed to Roberto Sanseverino, Cicco's mortal enemy, and Ludovico was given clearly to understand that they would not lay down their arms so long as Cicco was at liberty. It is quite possible that Ludovico was merely using him as a screen, though no less possible that he really wished to make use of his influence and experience, for it is always difficult to put one's finger on his real motives; in any case, he gave way: Cicco and his brother, Giovanni Simonetta, the historian, were arrested and taken to Pavia. Gian Giacomo Trivulzio did his best to save Cicco, but in vain. The houses of the loyal secretary of Francesco were given up to the mob and sacked. He possessed a good library, for he was a scholar with the Humanistic tastes of the time. It looks as if Ludovico tried to get possession of his considerable wealth,

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which he had deposited with a Florentine banker, by giving him to understand that, if he surrendered it, he might recover his liberty. Cicco declined the offer in a letter of much dignity, drawing attention to the way in which his loyal services to the dynasty were being rewarded. If he had been guilty of a crime, he was ready to bear the punishment, but his hard-won savings should go to his heirs. Life had no more value for him. He was beheaded a year later in the castle of Pavia, after being cruelly tortured, in the seventieth year of his age. Bona informed the French court, rejoicing at his fall. Ludovico wrote that he owed his death entirely to the bitter hatred of Roberto Sanseverino. His brother, Giovanni, who had worked with him all his life, was set at liberty owing, it was said, to the excellence of his life of Francesco Sforza, though probably because he had none of the power of Cicco and could not be dangerous. It is quite possible that Ludovico, with his instinctive hatred of cruelty, sent Cicco to his death unwillingly, though it would have been too much to expect him at that time to run any risk in order to save him.

Ludovico Sforza now steps into the limelight as the most important member of his family. The fifth child and fourth son of Bianca Maria, he was born at Vigevano in 1451, the first child to be born to Francesco after he had become Duke of Milan. He was christened Ludovico Maurus, but, while still a child, during a serious illness, his mother changed his second name to Maria, in accordance with the Visconti tradition, thus placing him under the protection of the Virgin, like herself. But the old name stuck: he became known as *Il Moro*. He readily adopted it and *Moro! Moro!* was the cry with which he was greeted in Milan. The nigger's head and the mulberry tree, which is a pun upon it, were among the devices he adopted. He also had a Moorish body-servant, a fashion in which he was followed by many of the nobles

when he came into power. It has been said that he owed his name to his swarthy complexion, but Paolo Giovio, who had seen him, assures us that he was not dark, adding that he derived his name from the mulberry tree, the wisest of all trees, because it is the last tree to put on its leaves and the first to bear fruit. Doubtless Il Moro adopted the explanation as readily as the device, for there is nothing upon which he prided himself more than upon his far-sighted statesmanship.

His father, like his teachers, thought well of his abilities. He was always the most studious of the boys, nor did he ever lose his love of books. He is said to have asked for a Dante during his imprisonment in France, "per studiare". He was the special favourite of his mother. The intimacy existing between them comes out in the letters he wrote her from Cremona in 1466-7,¹ in which he describes his visits to the churches and monasteries and the nobles in the neighbourhood. He pities her for the worries of her position, now that his father is dead, and wishes that he could give her some amusement to distract her. He promises to do all he can to please her, "since, in your wonderful kindness and great clemency, you are more eager for and desirous of my good than I am myself." Obviously the virago Bianca Maria was drawn to this affectionate, sensitive, gentle son of hers, who early showed his real religious feeling. Her daughter, Ippolita, her eldest child, says that she did her best to develop in them gentleness, a sense of justice and pleasing manners, qualities which were obviously more natural to Ludovico than to his brothers. In fact the rather feminine streak in his character appealed to the strongly masculine element in her own and her affection was only increased by his undoubted abilities. Moreover, he was tall and handsome, with a notably dignified bearing. At first

¹ A. Dina, in *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1886.

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he was also the favourite brother of Galeazzo Maria, who trusted him particularly; he even wished him to succeed to the dukedom, should he die without heirs; but the affection cooled, possibly because the Duke became aware of his gift for intrigue and the skill with which he could conceal his feelings. Galeazzo Maria used his abilities on missions and in various ways, but he was careful—and wise—never to place any of his brothers in positions of real authority.

Ludovico now set about securing the power at which he had all along been aiming. Tassino was the first and most troublesome obstacle in his way. His influence was considerable as, with the support of the infatuated Duchess, he had been filling every possible post with his nominees. His insolence had become intolerable. He would keep Ludovico waiting a long while in his ante-room while he was busy upon his toilet. Even the guards were his creatures. But the Rocchetta, the inner fortress of the Castle of Milan, was commanded by the loyal Filippo degli Eustacchi, who had sworn to give it up to no one but Gian Galeazzo when he came of age. Tassino could not feel safe till he controlled this, so he began to petition Bona to give the command to his own father, who had been made a Councillor of State; but Eustacchi vowed that nothing would induce him to be false to his oath or give up the Rocchetta to anyone but the young Duke. Seeing the danger, Ludovico and his friends cut the knot by carrying off the Duke and his brother to the Rocchetta and putting them in the charge of Eustacchi. The Duchess was now helpless. Tassino was compelled to leave, returning to his native Ferrara with well-lined pockets and fortified with the warmest letters of recommendation from Bona. On hearing of his departure she flew into a passion and, without a thought for her own dignity, talked of following him.

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The Ghibelline nobles who had helped Ludovico to power were hardly more pleased with their treatment at his hands. They turned to Ascanio, now Papal Legate, for the churchman had gone out of his way to make himself popular. Indeed, Ludovico found it expedient to arrest him and relegate him to his bishopric of Pavia, and to strip the leading nobles of all authority in the state. Ascanio was soon back in Milan.

Meanwhile Ludovico was inflicting further humiliations upon the luckless Bona, forcing her to sign away more and more of her liberties and rights. Though only twelve years old, Gian Galeazzo had been pronounced capable of governing and was naturally quite ready to sign any document his uncle might desire, even one ordering a reform of his mother's court, as she was continually complaining to her ladies of the treatment she was receiving. The result was that she announced her intention of leaving Milan immediately. She now signed a document resigning her guardianship of her son. She had intended to go to Piedmont, but when she had got no further than Abbiategrasso she was given clearly to understand that she was to stay there and take up her residence in the castle. It seems highly probable that a little later she was involved in a plot against Ludovico—and who can blame her?—when it required all the authority of the French court to hush up the scandal. Ludovico was made guardian of Gian Galeazzo and towards the end of 1480 the boy, clad in white velvet robes, was crowned Duke with full ceremony before the Duomo.

Ludovico felt secure now that his position had been legalized and was recognized by the leading Powers. Indeed, he was a little too secure to suit some of his old friends, notably Roberto Sanseverino. The hot-headed soldier, who had possibly believed that he could dominate Il Moro, rebelled at the thought of taking second place, or of being altogether ousted

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from power, for he was no match for Ludovico in intrigue. One day in September, 1481, he came down to the Council and demanded an increase in pay. When the Council demurred, he flew into a passion, heaping abuse and threats upon the assembly, then rushed from the room and galloped straight from Milan to his own town of Castelnovo, quite in the manner of the old condottieri. Here he began to intrigue with other malcontents, notably the Fieschi of Genoa. Costanzo Sforza, lord of Pesaro, then in the Milanese service, was sent to besiege him. He was forced to fly to Venice, where a soldier with his record was warmly welcomed.

Shortly after this, in 1481, began the war of Ferrara, which Venice and the Pope proposed to divide between them. The triple alliance of Milan, Florence and Naples came to the rescue of Ercole d'Este. His refusal to allow Venetian troops to cross his territory in support of another Milanese rebel, Pier Maria Rossi, constituted a *casus belli* for the Republic. Sanseverino commanded the Venetians, Federico d'Urbino the allies. In the course of the campaign Federico, who was in Ferrara, died within a few days of Roberto Malatesta of Rimini. Malaria appears to have been fatal to them both, though it was duly rumoured that Malatesta had been given poison in Rome. Such was the confidence of one condottiere in another that, though they were fighting in opposite camps, it was found that each had made the other guardian of his children.

When left in the lurch by the Pope Venice showed herself a dangerous enemy, not only in the field, where her troops raided right up to the park of Ferrara, but also in intrigue. The Pope deserted his allies partly from fear of the Council that was looming at Bâle, partly from dislike of their growing power. He had no real wish to see the Venetians established in Ferrara or the Romagna. They were already too strong

to be comfortable neighbours. Venice not only endeavoured to induce the people of the Grisons to advance into Lombardy and rouse the malcontents to revolt, but she also turned to France. Ludovico's treatment of Bona had aroused no little ill-feeling at the court of her sister, though Louis XI did not go beyond insisting that she should be paid her pension and treated with the respect due to her rank. On the accession of the minor Charles VIII in 1483 Venice began to urge France to assert the claims of the Angevins to Naples and even to press those of the Duke of Orleans to Milan. If the responsibility for calling in the French rests ultimately with Ludovico Sforza, it is only fair to point out that he was by no means the first in the field.

The Venetians, too, were almost certainly behind the attempt made upon the life of the Duke of Bari in this year, 1483, which failed only by an accident, though the prime movers were some of the discontented Ghibelline lords. Their avowed object was to restore authority to the Duchess Bona. Once again a church was chosen for the attempt. The Dukes of Milan always went to S. Ambrogio for Mass on S. Ambrose Day, when the conspirators had decided to kill Ludovico much as his brother had been killed. The confidence of the Sforzas in the affection of the Milanese is shown by the few precautions they thought it necessary to take, even after the fate of Galeazzo Maria. Such was the crowd round the main door of the church, where the conspirators were waiting, that Ludovico went in by a side entrance and escaped. Nothing daunted, the conspirators decided to make another attempt as he entered the castle. But as Luigi Vimercate stood before the fire in one of the halls the light showed that he had an unsheathed dagger under his cloak. He was arrested and, under torture, confessed all, revealing the names of his accomplices, most of whom had fled. Vimercate was the only victim. Another accomplice, Pasino, was tortured

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and imprisoned for life, being condemned to receive a couple of good jerks with the strappado upon S. Ambrose Day, the anniversary of his crime, to keep his memory fresh.

Another source of trouble was the attitude of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, the heir to the Neapolitan throne. He and Ludovico seem to have taken a dislike to each other from the first, during the War of Ferrara. His daughter, Isabella, was betrothed to Gian Galeazzo and he saw that Ludovico was aiming at the Dukedom. The timid Ludovico realized that Alfonso was not particularly enthusiastic in promoting the interests of the man who was trying to supplant his future son-in-law in the Duchy of Milan; hence, when Venice, now, as always, supplied with accurate information about the true state of affairs in Milan, secretly approached Ludovico with proposals for peace, undertaking to help him maintain his authority with all her strength, he gladly listened. Ludovico thus came to terms with Venice without consulting his allies, receiving a handsome bribe for his pains. The Peace of Bagnolo gave Ludovico security, while Venice gained all her objects. The feelings of the allies can be imagined. The Duke of Calabria henceforth conceived a bitter hatred of Il Moro, while chagrin at the iniquitous peace is said to have been the immediate cause of the death of Pope Sixtus IV. He had given Ascanio a red hat in this very year, 1484. The step caused much rejoicing, as he was the first cardinal in the Sforza family.

To celebrate the peace Ludovico sent a brilliant company to Venice, among them his own natural son, Leone, and the Sanseverino brothers, Galeazzo and Fracassa. They were the sons of his implacable enemy, Roberto, who was later to die fighting for Venice in the Trentino, at the age of seventy. But they did not share his feelings. With their eldest brother, the head of the clan, Count Caiazzo, they

soon became leading figures at the Milanese court. Their grandmother, Elisa, was a sister of Francesco Sforza and, as one would expect, a "donna di virili costumi". Clearly her grandsons had inherited far more of the old Sforza fighting spirit than those of her brother. Gaspare, known as Fracassa (Noisy), was a rough soldier and nothing more, entirely lacking in the courtly graces of the day; but Galeazzo was an admirable specimen of a knight of the Renaissance. He had no rival in Italy, possibly in Europe, at the tourney and on this occasion at Venice the brothers carried off the prizes, which, as usual, consisted of lengths of gold and silver brocade. In the *Cortegiano*, written when Galeazzo had deserted the fallen Sforzas for France, Castiglione says that this model of skill and grace in all bodily exercises always insisted on having the best professionals to teach him. He also appears to have possessed a rare charm, which early won him the friendship of Ludovico. Honours were showered upon him. He was made commander-in-chief, given a palace in Milan, as well as his father's town of Castelnovo; finally, he married Il Moro's natural daughter, Bianca, and was adopted into the Sforza family.

The years that followed were disturbed by some descents of the Swiss into Lombardy and by the war between King Ferrante and his revolting barons, who had the support of the Pope. It was not the cruelty of the king or his son, but his desire to assert his right to grant the investiture of Naples that induced Innocent VIII to intervene. He, too, urged the King of France to press his claim to the Southern Kingdom and lead an army against Ferrante, a suggestion that greatly perturbed Ludovico. He had been very unwilling to send help to the king in accordance with the terms of the alliance, but at last, largely owing to the efforts of Lorenzo dei Medici, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio went South with an army to his aid. It soon became clear

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that the chief object of Milan was to bring about a peace before the French could intervene. In this they were successful. Alfonso of Calabria had pressed on to within a few miles of Rome and the Pope was glad to come to terms. These were negotiated by Trivulzio in Rome in August, 1486. It was now that Trivulzio began his close association with Naples by marrying a d'Avalos. Ferrante paid not the slightest heed to his promise to pardon his barons. The treachery and brutality with which he and Alfonso treated them stand out conspicuously even in that cynical age.

In pursuance of his plan of getting the strong places of the Duchy into his own hands Ludovico now seized the castle of Pavia. This step made a great impression at the time, giving rise to not a little murmuring in Milan itself, but most of the ill-feeling awakened was allayed by the general joy at his recovery of Genoa. Playing off party against party in that faction-ridden city, he made the most of his diplomatic skill. His proceedings in this part of his nephew's dominions caused some irritation at Florence, but the three Powers were too conscious of the necessity of hanging together to allow a frontier incident or Ferrante's broken word to his barons to create serious trouble between them.

In 1489 Il Moro completed his control of the fortresses by seizing the Rocchetta of the castle of Milan. It was put about that a plot had been hatched by Luigi da Terzago, one of Ludovico's secretaries, to which Filippo degli Eustacchi, the commander of the Rocchetta, was privy. They were said to have proposed to seize the two dukes. Uncle and nephew returned to Milan from Pavia and when Eustacchi came out to kiss the hand of Gian Galeazzo, according to his custom, he was seized. Commynes says that the garrison raised the drawbridge, whereupon Ludovico lit a candle, declaring that, unless the Rocchetta surrendered before it had burnt out, he would execute his prisoners on the spot. The story suggests France

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rather than Il Moro. Terzago was flung into a wooden cage at the bottom of a tower at Pavia. He begged for a little clean straw, but in vain. Eustacchi was long imprisoned, but ultimately released. The Nuncio, Gherardi, whom Ludovico seems to have successfully bamboozled more than once, believed that the plot was genuine, as of course it may have been, though it is difficult to believe that Filippo degli Eustacchi was a party to it. Gherardi reported to Rome that the Duke of Bari was seriously perturbed by it, and expressed admiration of the energy he had displayed in dealing with it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARRIAGE OF GIAN GALEAZZO SFORZA AND ISABELLA D'ARAGONA

THESE were the years upon which historians writing after the French invasion looked back much as we now look back upon the reign of Edward VII. Never, says Guicciardini, had Italy known such prosperity or a state so desirable as that which she enjoyed in full security in the year 1490 and the years just before and after it. Corio, writing for Milan, says that everyone thought that all outstanding questions had been peacefully settled and men had but one idea, to pile up wealth, an occupation for which there was now every opportunity. "Merrymaking and pleasure-seeking were all the rage and Jove triumphed with peace, so that everywhere there seemed to reign a stability and security never before known. The court of our princes was magnificently rich in new fashions, clothes and pleasures. Yet the virtues were so well cultivated that there had grown up a regular rivalry between Minerva and Venus, each trying to adorn her own school to the best of her ability. To the school of Cupid handsome youths flocked from all sides: thither fathers brought their daughters, husbands their wives, brothers their sisters," as readers of *Bandello* will remember. "The women of Milan," that novelist tells us, "are as a rule, sociable, human, agreeable and naturally inclined to love and to be loved and always to lead a life of love"; nor must we forget the Milanese proverb about letting your coat be ragged, so long as your plate be full. "Minerva (to return to Corio) also exerted all her powers to

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equip her gentle academy, for which, at his own expense, Ludovico Sforza, a glorious and most illustrious prince, sought out the best men from the uttermost parts of Europe in every faculty. . . . Also the sweetest and most pleasant harmony of every kind of music and song seemed to descend from Heaven upon the excellent court. So many men of singular ability were summoned hither and treated with such liberality that it seemed like the Golden Age. In the midst of this idle happiness the illustrious princes of the House of Sforza visited the cities and the pleasant places of their state in the enjoyment of varied amusement."

Until his marriage the Duke of Bari had no difficulty in his relations with his nephew. The Duke of Milan was invariably treated with the respect due to his rank and kept in the first place as a figurehead, but the moment any serious business was in hand his uncle came quietly to the front. This we see from the despatches of the Nuncio Gherardi. Ludovico's suppleness and tact, his perfect self-control made him admirably fitted for his position. The real power was, of course, entirely in his hands. Gian Galeazzo never developed properly and he seems to have been quite incapable of playing the part of a ruler of a great state like the Duchy of Milan. "The Most Illustrious Duke has no mind for public affairs", wrote Gherardi in 1489. "He wanders about the neighbouring estates amusing himself with hawking and hunting, nor is there anything he dislikes so much as the mention of public business." He was not very wise, says Commynes. A weakness for drink—a rare vice in Italy at that time—which he seems to have developed early was not calculated to strengthen him either mentally or physically. It seems probable that his uncle made no effort to see that he was well educated as he and his brothers had been, and there can be no possible doubt that he deliberately encouraged him in

his vices, in his tendency to low amours with both sexes, in order to sap his strength and his will. His ascendancy over him was complete. Gian Galeazzo was very good-looking in a Lombard way, with fair hair and well-cut features—"though handsome he was very slow witted", says a chronicler. Simple-minded and trustful, he appears to have been really attached to his uncle, turning to him for everything, as Ludovico meant that he should. Writing in April, 1488, the Nuncio describes an interview he had with the Duke of Bari, who was seriously ill. Gian Galeazzo was present the whole time and helped him to lift his hand when necessary, as he was too weak to raise it to his face.

This was the serious illness that nearly carried off Il Moro. He was already down with it when the Nuncio arrived in October, 1487. Gherardi was kept waiting a couple of hours in a small bedroom in the Castle for his first audience. The Duke received him in bed, but fully dressed. The audience was private, lasting two hours, and the Duke was completely exhausted at the end of it. He then had some food and was carried to the Sala della Balla, where he lay on a couch and watched the game of *pallone*, Gherardi being invited to join him. His recovery resulted in a great demonstration of loyalty in Milan. Ludovico believed that his life had been saved by Ambrogio da Varese, who was on that account made Count of Rosate and given the estate and castle there by Gian Galeazzo.

Ascanio was much in the foreground while his brother was ill, and quite ready to step into his shoes, if necessary. On Ludovico's recovery he was seized with a sudden revival of interest in his ecclesiastical duties, and returned to Rome. He appears to have been a good churchman for his day, showing the family gift for administration in the way in which he managed the affairs of the bishoprics, abbeys and other

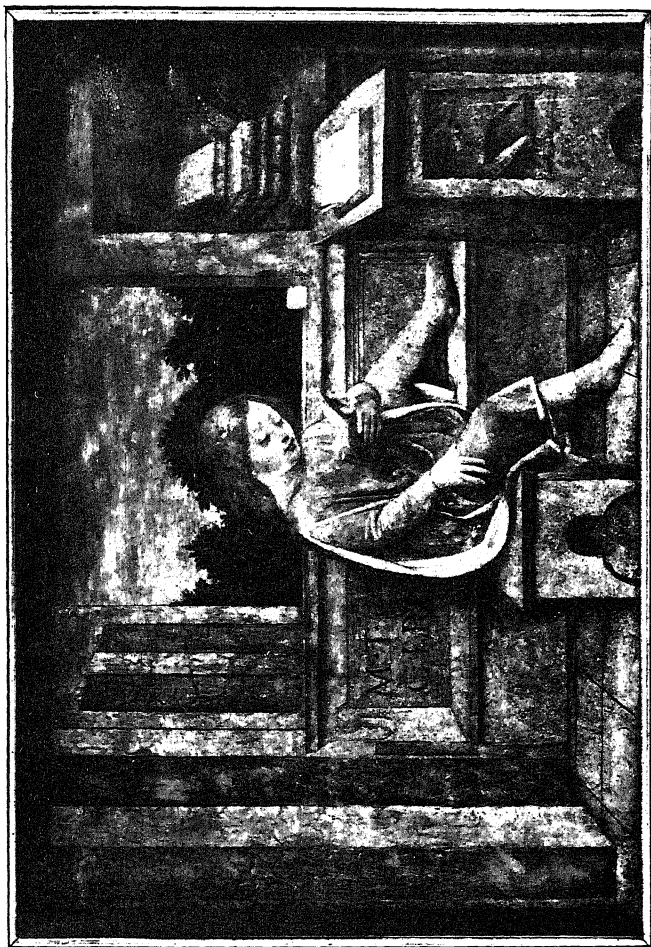
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ecclesiastical benefices that had been showered upon him. His palace, before Rodrigo Borgia gave him his own, was on the Piazza Navona in Rome, and is still commemorated in the Vicolo d'Ascanio. The triumphal return of his great hunting-parties with the long strings of guests and huntsmen and dogs and carts loaded with game, to the sound of trumpets, was long remembered as something unique in Rome. There was never a greater sportsman in the Sacred College. His interest in animals did not stop here. He once paid a hundred ducats for a parrot that could say the creed.

The Nuncio thought Ludovico changeable and capricious, but was struck by his apparent sincerity, as by his *arguzia*—the brilliance of his talk and his witty, appropriate answers and quotations, a quality already highly valued by the end of the Quattrocento. Ludovico did not pretend to take the good wishes or the compliments of the Pope at their face value.

It is probable that the Duke of Bari was by no means anxious to celebrate the marriage of his nephew to Isabella d'Aragona, which had been arranged as long ago as 1480. Some of her childish letters to her husband have been preserved, with one of which she sends him a present of a horse. But Alfonso of Calabria was at no pains to conceal his opinion of Ludovico and the way he was treating his nephew. Ferrante was getting old and Alfonso would soon be king of Naples and might be a very formidable enemy. The Duke of Milan was already twenty and it was clearly time to conciliate public opinion both in Milan and Naples. Moreover, a dowry of 100,000 ducats was worth some sacrifice. So in 1488 it was decided that Gian Galeazzo should at last wed his bride.

The marriage of the Duke ushered in the most splendid period in the history of Renaissance Milan. His brother, Ermes, was despatched to Naples with a suite of 450 persons. Some of the nobles wore 7,000



GIAN GALEAZZO SFORZA READING CICERO

Fresco attributed to Bramantino

[Wallace Collection]

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ducats worth of jewels on a single sleeve. Young Calco, son of Ludovico's chief secretary, who was at the head of them, says they were like so many kings. Even the servants were dressed in silk. Yet they could wear this finery for only two days, as, except during the actual ceremony, the Neapolitan court was in mourning for the bride's mother, that remarkable woman, Ippolita Sforza. As usual, the marriage took place in mid-winter and the weather was bad. On the way back the bridal train put in at Civita Vecchia, where Ascanio entertained them sumptuously. They were also splendidly entertained at Leghorn by their Florentine allies. At Genoa the bride, who had suffered a good deal on the voyage, rested a few days, much to the annoyance of Ludovico. Her reception was worthy of that wealthy city. This was in January, 1489.

Isabella was met at Tortona by the two Dukes. The rain fell in torrents. Gian Galeazzo, refusing to let her kiss his hand in the Neapolitan fashion, would have kissed her himself on the lips, had the restlessness of their mounts permitted. A notable mythological dinner was served at Tortona, such as appealed to the taste of the Renaissance. Apollo appeared with a calf he had stolen from Admetus, Orpheus brought in the birds he had charmed with his lyre, while Diana presented the stag into which she had transformed Actaeon, saying that he could not have a nobler resting-place than the stomach of such a bride. Ulysses brought in a Siren, but explained that all her wiles would be futile against Isabella's strength and wisdom. The dinner was followed by a fable with music.

The failure of the young Duke to consummate the marriage at Vigevano immediately became public property, being discussed at every court in Italy, as the Duke of Bari took care that it should. Isabella was convinced that it was caused by witchcraft and

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magic spells cast upon him by Ludovico, and we may be sure that he consulted his astrologer about the date. Though he was her mother's brother, she would have been taught to suspect her uncle at her home in Naples.

However, the two Dukes went on to Milan. There they met Isabella, who had been brought up the canal with six sumptuous barges, at the dock by the Porta Ticinese. The crowd, eager to see the bride, was enormous. She landed amid salvoes of artillery, the blare of trumpets and the ringing of all the bells in the city. The Duke and his bride walked hand-in-hand to the Castle. They were a well-matched pair, the dark strong-willed Southern girl and her fair-haired frail husband, whom she seems to have loved, and perhaps to have pitied from the first. The court of the Castle was festooned with laurel and ivy for the occasion. The Duke's sister, Bianca Maria, met them at the gate and escorted Isabella to her room.

The following description of the wedding ceremony was sent to Lorenzo dei Medici by one of his correspondents :

"Magnificent Lorenzo.—From another of mine written to you yesterday evening Your Magnificence will have learnt the arrangements of yesterday morning for the entry of Madonna the Duchess. By this I have to inform you that the marriage took place this morning and the wedding Mass was heard in the Duomo. It was a most beautiful and a most worthy ceremony, as Your Magnificence will see from what follows. First, all the court and the gentlemen were gathered in the castle, then at the fifteenth hour the Lord Duke and Signor Messer Ludovico and all the other barons and gentlemen went to fetch Madonna the Duchess from her room, and everyone mounted on horseback and started out of the castle in pairs. At the last gate was a canopy of white damask with the arms of the Lord which was borne by about forty doctors dressed in crimson satin, and their caps were

of the same. The Lord Duke and Her Excellency the Lady went beneath the said canopy, and thus they went in pairs to the Cathedral. When they had arrived Mass was sung by the singers of the Lord and the Bishop of Piacenza said it. When it was over Bishop Sanseverino delivered a most suitable address. Then the Lord Duke gave the ring to Her Excellency his Lady : when this had been done, the Most Illustrious Lord Duke knighted our Piero Allamanni [Florentine ambassador] and the Magnificent Messer Bartolomeo Calcho. To Piero he gave a garment of gold brocade as rich and magnificent as could be imagined and the gift was a great honour. Messer Galeazzo and the Count of Caiazzo put on their spurs and girt them with their swords. Then the whole party mounted again and returned to the castle amid great rejoicings and triumph. And according to the calculations made by one present there were five hundred horses. There were counted thirty-six priests and friars who went in front of the whole court as far as the Cathedral : sixty knights all in dresses of gold brocade with chains : fifty women, twenty-eight dressed in gold brocade with pearls and jewels and a number of chains : sixty-two trumpeters, twelve pipers. From the castle to the Cathedral it is 1,700 paces and the whole road was carpeted with white cloth and the walls on each side draped with tapestry and festooned with juniper and orange ; nothing better was ever seen. Moreover all the doors and windows were filled with girls and women most richly arrayed, and to keep back the mob at the corners of the lanes that lead to the principal streets down which the procession passed there were barriers and at each corner ten or twelve guards. On the Piazza del Duomo were lined up two thousand Stradiots and mounted crossbowmen. There was no disorder, which was no small wonder, considering the great and innumerable multitude that dwells in this city ; it is true that the order against carrying arms

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is very strictly enforced, except for our own people who can wear them.

"The Most Excellent Duke wore a vest of the richest brocade. In his cap was a diamond with a large pearl larger than a round nut and of the greatest value. At his neck he had a pendant with a balas ruby and above it a wonderful diamond. Her Excellency Madonna the Duchess was also dressed in gold brocade and had a rope of pearls on her head with some very beautiful jewels, and there were many other women very richly dressed. I am not sending their names because I do not know them.

"Messer Hannibale had a dress of gold brocade slashed with black velvet and where it was folded back in front of his breast was an aigrette of pearls in excellent taste, though not of great value; it would rather be described as becoming. Signor Ludovico and Signor Galeazzo and Signor Ridolfo with all the other Sforza men were also dressed in gold brocade, and most people agree that there was enough silver and gold to dress three hundred people. Of velvet and satin I say nothing, because even the cooks wore it.

"The vest of our Piero was considered admirable and in my opinion surpassed every other. To-day these gentlemen have sent for it and wished to see it and examine it carefully; indeed, everyone is astonished at it. I know I have written confusedly and without order, but by God's will we shall make up for that when we talk, and I have more leisure than I have at present, as I am to ride to court with Piero.

"SERVITOR STEPHANUS.

"Milan, this 2nd day of February, 1489."

Trotti, the Ferrarese ambassador, wrote home that nothing was to be seen but gold and silver brocade and jewels. In their own Via degli Orefici the goldsmiths had a boy dressed as Cupid mounted upon a gold ball round which were a number of Sforza

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emblems who welcomed the bride and bridegroom in appropriate verse.

Ludovico soon carried them off to Pavia, Giangaleazzo Visconti's noble castle, built in Lombard terracotta, with its four great towers and its beautiful arcaded court that recalled Venice, its vast park covering thirteen square miles, beyond which the unique Certosa was slowly rising to completion.

From the first there was trouble between Ludovico and the Duchess, which gives the lie to an absurd report, recorded by Guicciardini, that he fell in love with her. He proposed to give her an allowance of 13,000 ducats, but she demanded 18,000 and sent some of the Neapolitans who had formed her escort to press her claim. There had been considerable ill-feeling between them and the Milanese contingent at Naples, the Milanese complaining, among other things, that the bride's relatives had collected all the short weight ducats they could find to pay her dowry. Ludovico, who must have been sadly disillusioned at such independence on the part of his nephew's bride, was very angry, saying that his sister had been given much less by Ferrante and had been quite satisfied. All her Neapolitan ladies were sent back and Isabella, in despair, declared that she was the most unhappily married woman in the world. Trotti, who was on intimate terms with Ludovico, realized how matters stood. He wrote that every word she uttered would be repeated to the Duke of Bari, but that she was too wise and had been too well brought up to say anything that she should not say.

Ludovico did, however, raise her allowance to 15,000 ducats, but all her payments had to be made through her steward, who had, of course, been appointed by Ludovico.¹ She drank no wine, but she had a Neapolitan weakness for sweet drinks,

¹ For all this see A. Dina, *I. d' Aragona*, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, Dec., 1921.

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whereupon the Seneschal complained that she consumed more sugar than all the rest of the court put together, adding that she must learn to live in the Lombard style. Such petty meanness is quite in the manner of an Italian court or great family, who would unhesitatingly spend a fortune on a dress or jewel.

No one had more influence with Ludovico than Ambrogio da Rosate, the physician and astrologer. The Duke of Bari was a firm believer in astrology, and he was convinced that he owed his life to Ambrogio who had tended him in his severe illness. When he ill-treated a Neapolitan page of the Duchess, who had been a favourite with her mother, Isabella complained to her uncle. The result was that the page was dismissed. She knew that her husband was quite incapable of protecting her; indeed, he told her to let herself be governed by his uncle, who had ruled his state so long and so well; he would know how to manage her and her court; she should follow his advice and do as he wished. Ludovico was too diplomatic not to treat her with the utmost deference in public. In 1493 we find her thanking him for having, with his accustomed paternal affection, put a stop to some "immodest and insolent behaviour" of which she had complained. But Trotti wrote (February 18th, 1489): "The new Duchess sheds more tears than she eats mouthfuls and is the most unhappy lady that ever was in the world and I am writing Gospel truth. . . . A day or two ago they took her out hunting, when she never opened her lips, holding her sables in front of her eyes and her mouth, and it was thought that she was crying."

Then there was the other question. Trotti says that he is sure that Gian Galeazzo is in love with her, but dare not look at her. Possibly his failure to consummate the marriage was due to some nervous weakness; possibly to his consciousness of Isabella's moral superiority and her utter difference from the

women to whom he had been accustomed ; possibly to the way in which his uncle treated him. Ludovico was always at him on the subject, making him ridiculous in the eyes of the whole of the court, as well as of his wife. He would listen without a word, almost with tears in his eyes and, continues Trotti, "I am really very sorry for him ; no one could be better tempered or more docile and he has ability and is distinctly handsome." Trotti, by the way, does not exaggerate in the matter of looks. At the wedding he described Isabella as dark of complexion, not very good-looking, but she had a "*zentile et bella persona*", while the Duke was "*bellissimo et bonissimo*". After one of these lectures Ludovico would go out and leave the young couple together, whereupon Gian Galeazzo had the decency to rush from the room. Trotti realized that his uncle's behaviour had the very opposite effect from what he pretended to desire. No one knew this better than Ludovico, who meant, if possible, to prevent the consummation of the marriage. Meanwhile Gian Galeazzo was carrying on his usual amours in other quarters ; in this he was no worse than almost every other prince in Italy.

Pavia soon became the real home of the Duke and Duchess. When Isabella went to Milan for a few days her uncle would allow no one to visit her. At Vigevano she once burst out to one of the few men who ventured to pay his respects to her that she was desperate. All she prayed for was death.

But Ludovico began to realize that he was going too far. Ferrante was thinking seriously of fetching Isabella back to Naples. Il Moro informed his unfortunate nephew in the presence of the Archbishop of Milan and some nobles that the King of Naples had written that, so far from sending the final instalment of the dowry, he might, in the circumstances, ask for the return of the money already paid and even of the bride herself. Trotti adds that

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Gian Galeazzo was deeply chagrined. The feelings of the proud, high-spirited young Duchess can be imagined.

In January, 1490, the Duke of Bari gave a splendid entertainment to his niece in the Castello di Porta Giovia. This Festa del Paradiso was designed by Maestro Lionardo, the Florentine, who was none other than Leonardo da Vinci. The words were from the pen of the court poet, Bellincioni, who had formed part of the suite sent to bring Isabella back from Naples. The assembly was worthy of the occasion. The principal guests were seated on a raised platform; the musicians were on another. The Duke of Bari's dress was something in the Spanish style, possibly out of compliment to Isabella. The Duchess was covered with jewels, so lovely and so magnificently arrayed that she might have been the sun, says Prato, the chronicler, in her robe of Ducal white velvet trimmed with gold. A loud fanfare of trumpets and drums announced the commencement of the entertainment. Isabella stepped out into the middle of the room with three of her maidens and trod two of the stately measures of the period, then returned to her place. There followed a series of masques in costumes of different countries to greet the Duchess. At last a curtain was lowered and the Paradiso appeared. The idea was Ludovico's: it may well reflect his interest in astrology. It consisted of a semi-circle, gilded inside, with stars and planets ranged in it, according to their rank. They were all living beings, turning in their orbits and singing the praises of the Duchess. Round the edge were the signs of the Zodiac and in the Paradiso was "much singing and playing, very sweet and soft". At the end Apollo, by Jove's command, seized the Three Graces and the Seven Virtues and brought them prisoners to the Duchess, whereupon they offered her the verses that had been sung and spoken in her praise in a volume.

Then the whole company escorted her to her apartment with exquisite music and singing.

It was after this performance that Ludovico took the opportunity of telling Pandolfini, the Florentine ambassador, that the commission of two ambassadors who had been sent with two matrons to go into the question of the non-consummation of the marriage had suggested that he should himself take both the Dukedom and the bride, but that he could never do anything so shameful.

Better news soon followed. In May, 1490, the Nuncio Gherardi informed the Pope that the marriage had at last been consummated, and at Vigevano, and that it was said that the Duke of Milan now needed the bridle rather than the spur. The young couple soon became deeply attached to each other and Isabella was very jealous of her husband.

In the same month of January, 1490, took place the wedding of Galeazzo da Sanseverino and Bianca Sforza, which gave Milan another first-class entertainment. The bride was only eight. Her father had taken the precaution of legitimizing her and he was devoted to her, as he was to all his children. He showed his affection for her and for Galeazzo by presenting them with the Medici bank, which was quite close to the castle, as a residence. Nothing remains of it now, but the beautifully carved marble door in the Castle museum. It had belonged to Luigi da Terzago, who had lavished money upon it, particularly upon the gardens. Lorenzo dei Medici tried to buy it back, but Ludovico, who meant it for Galeazzo, said that, with the improvements, it was worth double the sum he offered. Henceforth Galeazzo became a member of Ludovico's family and was on terms of the utmost intimacy with him. As commander-in-chief he had a whole court of the Castle to himself, with a stable full of his horses, which were numerous and of the best. "It seems to me that

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Messer Galeazzo is Duke of Milan", grumbles Trotti. "He can do just what he likes and has everything he asks for or wants." The favour shown him, combined with his haughty manners, awakened no little jealousy among the other members of the court, such as Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, who had been a chosen playmate of the Sforza boys. A rough, sturdy fighting man, an experienced commander, he was of the type of the old condottieri, hardly one to be a chosen intimate of the polished Ludovico. So furious was he at the carpet-knight Galeazzo being placed over him that he offered his sword to Ferrante of Naples and in later days was to become one of the most formidable enemies of the Sforzas.

CHAPTER IX

THE MARRIAGE OF LUDOVICO SFORZA AND BEATRICE D'ESTE. LEONARDO DA VINCI

LASTLY, the Duke of Bari set about making arrangements for his own marriage, which was long overdue. As early as 1480 he had asked his old friend and ally Duke Ercole of Ferrara for the hand of his elder daughter, Isabella. But she was already promised to Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, son of the Marquis of Mantua, whereupon Ercole offered him his second daughter, Beatrice, who was a year younger than her sister. The bridegroom was twenty-nine, the bride five.

There was no more attractive court in Italy than that of Ferrara under Duke Ercole. The city reached its greatest beauty, the university the highest point of its fame at this time. Though not particularly cultivated himself, Ercole took the lead in all the reforms and, thanks largely to his encouragement and enthusiasm, the Italian drama may be said to owe its revival to Ferrara. Duchess Leonora and her daughters, more especially Isabella, were probably, all things considered, the most accomplished princesses in Italy. They were endowed with a culture and a refinement such as we find nowhere else except at Urbino, later to become the scene of the *Cortegiano*. Moreover, they were united by a family affection that comes out in their letters, of which so many have fortunately been preserved for us. There is something extraordinarily modern about those of Isabella. They hardly seem to date. As Signor Luzio, who has done so much to make them known, puts it, the documents

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in the Gonzaga archives have the special gift of "making our glorious Renaissance live again in a host of revelations, often unexpected, always suggestive and characteristic." The court circle of Ferrara also seems to have spread a refining, civilizing influence upon most of those who came within its orbit. The letters of some of the ladies in waiting are as amusing and kindly and refined as those of their mistresses. At a later date Lucrezia Borgia herself, with her weak and rather yielding character, seems readily to have fallen under the spell of her surroundings.

At the time of her betrothal Ludovico's bride was at Naples, where he probably saw her when he went South to receive the investiture of the Duchy of Bari from Ferrante after the death of his brother Sforza Maria. The Duchess Leonora had gone thither to visit her father in 1477. When war broke out and Ercole d'Este was made commander-in-chief of the Florentines, she was obliged to return to Ferrara, where she proved a thoroughly capable regent. She left her newly-born boy behind her and Ferrante insisted on keeping Beatrice as well. He had taken a great fancy to her; possibly her high spirits amused him. There she spent her childhood in the Castel Nuovo, down by the magic Bay. Among her playmates was the dark-eyed little Isabella d'Aragona, whose home was in the gloomy Castel Capuano, with her parents, Alfonso, Duke of Calabria and Ippolita Sforza, and who was later to be her rival.

Beatrice had been well educated, according to the ideas of the times. Children began work early in those days and they worked hard, the girls as well as the boys. We read of Beatrice's eldest boy, not yet three, being taken to see the Archbishop of Milan, who was much gratified at the visit. When asked what he would like most, he answered, "Not to go to school." Ippolita Sforza was too well educated herself to neglect a child left in her charge and Beatrice

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was her husband's niece. Even the ruthless Alfonso had been brought up in the respect for scholarship that was traditional in the House of Aragon. The d'Este sisters learnt Latin and some Greek and could dance and sing from their earliest years. Moreover they had inherited, or early acquired, a taste for all that was best in the poetry and art of the Renaissance and were eager to recognize and encourage any talent that might come to their notice. Their mother, Duchess Leonora, shared, possibly inspired these interests.

Ludovico proved a laggard lover. The weddings of the two sisters were to have been in 1490, when Isabella married Gonzaga, but Ludovico delayed, pleading in excuse the youth of the bride and his own many activities. The Duke and Duchess of Ferrara were becoming nervous, for they were well aware of the chief reason for the delay. In addition to Bianca, whose mother was Bernardina de Corradis, Ludovico had a son called Leone by an unknown Roman woman, and almost as long as he had been betrothed to Beatrice d'Este, the lovely, accomplished, well-born Cecilia Gallerani had been his mistress. Ludovico does not seem to have been vulgar in his loves. He was genuinely attached to the Gallerani, who had rooms in the Castello. To her Ludovico gave the Broletto Nuovo, the palace which had once belonged to Carmagnola. The deed of gift by which he made over to her the estate of Saronno in 1481 celebrates her virtues and sings her praises after the curious manner of the time.

Apart from Il Moro Cecilia seems to have been a model of virtue. After she married Count Bergamini she held a very prominent position in Milan and was even ranked with Isabella d'Este and Vittoria Colonna as one of the most accomplished women in Italy by her enthusiastic admirers. She appears more than once in Bandello's tales, which shed so interesting a light on Renaissance Milan, though of course he

belongs to a rather younger generation. The third story introduces us to the palace of Ippolita Sforza Bentivoglio, outside the Porta Cremonese, where all the learned men of the town were to be found. Here "our two Muses", as he calls them elsewhere, the Signora Cecilia Bergamini and the Signora Camilla Scarampa, read their sonnets. In the twenty-second novel, which is dedicated to the Gallerani, he says it would have seemed like committing a sacrilege not to turn aside and visit her in her castle in the Cremonese, when he was passing that way, and he recalls the warmth of the welcome she gave him. Deserting her favourite studies of the Latin and Italian poets, she passed the time chatting pleasantly with him and his friend. Later she was much commended for the orations, generally in Latin, which she delivered on great occasions to her admiring friends.

Here is another portrait. "While the most gentle and learned Signora Cecilia, Countess Bergamini, was recently drinking the waters of the Bagni d'Aquano [like other characters in the tales] to strengthen the weakness of her digestion, she was visited by a number of gentlemen and ladies, partly because she is an agreeable and virtuous lady, partly because all the best and most superior intellects in Milan, as well as such foreigners as happen to be there, are to be found in her company. Here soldiers talk of their profession, musicians sing, artists and painters draw, philosophers discuss questions of nature and poets recite their own and other people's verses, so that everyone who delights to talk of virtue or to hear it discussed finds his wishes satisfied, because they always talk of pleasant, virtuous and gentle things in the presence of this heroine." Doubtless also they amused themselves *onestamente* with tales such as Messer Bandello, a Dominican of S. Maria delle Grazie and later a bishop, has left us. Bandello looked back on the reign of Il Moro with wistful longing, for his family

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had been loyal to the Sforzas and had suffered heavily in consequence.

Leonardo da Vinci painted a famous portrait of Cecilia Gallerani. Bellincioni wrote a sonnet in his usual hyperbolical style, paying a characteristic compliment to the lady rather than to the picture.

POET : With whom are you angry ? Whom do you envy, Nature ?

NATURE : Vinci, who has drawn a star of yours, Cecilia. So perfectly beautiful is she that to her bright eyes the sun seems a dark shadow.

POET : The honour is his, although in his painting he makes her seem to be listening, not speaking : she thinks : the more alive and lovely she is, the greater will be your glory in future ages. So thank Ludovico, or the genius and skill of Leonardo, who wish all future generations to enjoy you.

Unfortunately it has shared the fate of much of Leonardo's best work, though various unconvincing attempts have been made to identify it.

Isabella d'Este was on good terms with Cecilia and after the French conquest she gave her shelter and treated her kindly at Mantua. In 1499, when she had been seeing a number of pictures by Giovanni Bellini, she was filled with a desire to compare them with something by Leonardo. She wrote to the Gallerani, asking her for the loan of the portrait, "because, in addition to the satisfaction the comparison will give us, we shall also have the pleasure of beholding your face" ; and she promises to return it at once. Cecilia replied on April 29th, saying that she would send it even more readily, were the likeness closer, but "let not your Ladyship imagine that this comes from any fault of the master—and in truth I do not believe he has an equal—but it is merely because the portrait was painted at a time when I was so undeveloped and I have changed so much since. No one who saw it and myself together would think it was meant for me. However, I beg Your Ladyship to rest assured of my

good will. I am prepared to do far more than send the portrait to give you pleasure."

There was nothing spiritual about the appearance of the typical Lombard women of the Quattrocento. Healthy and full-blooded, they possessed strong individualities. Ludovico did not hesitate much longer. Giacomo Trotti, who was by now a recognized institution at Milan, was sent to Ferrara to make the arrangements and set forth Ludovico's views. Then came another delay, which caused much uneasiness to the d'Este. Trotti wrote in November, 1490, that, if Signor Ludovico was not overjoyed at the coming of Madonna our Duchess, that is to say, the Duchess Leonora, "this is due to his respect for the Duchess, owing to the gossip that has occurred; or really out of respect for this lady love of his, whom he keeps in the Castle and takes with him wherever he goes; and she is with child and as lovely as a flower and he often takes me with him to see her. But time, which must not be forced, heals all things. The less importance we appear to attach to her, the more quickly will he give her up. I know what I am saying."

By this time everything was settled. In August Ludovico had sent Francesco da Casate to Ferrara with the most definite promises. He brought the bride a string of valuable pearls set in gold flowers, with a fine emerald, a balass ruby and a pearl in a pear-shaped jewel. Once again the wedding was arranged for the depth of winter. Beatrice's mother and her sister, Isabella, were to accompany her. The young Marchioness of Mantua decided to do things in style, proposing to bring a suite of a hundred, with trumpeters, and ninety horses; for she knew that there was no more splendid court in Italy than that of the Sforzas. But when Ludovico requested her to bring as few persons as possible, owing to the number of guests expected, she halved the number of

her suite and took only thirty horses. Doubtless, at heart, she was not sorry to curtail the expense, which she could ill afford.

Meanwhile Ludovico commissioned Cristoforo Romano, who had been sent him from Rome by Ascanio as a promising young sculptor, to go to Ferrara and make the bust of Beatrice which is now in the Louvre. It is probably a speaking likeness. Beatrice was only fifteen, not fully developed, and the expression has something almost childlike about it. Her puffy cheeks, and full lips come from the House of Aragon, or rather from her mother. Her small, pointed nose is very characteristic. It was not to her looks that she owed her charm, but to her vivacity, her spirit and energy, the life that breathes in all we know of her, as in the portrait in the Ambrosian by Leonardo, upon which not very convincing doubts have been thrown.

The winter was very cold, one of the coldest ever known. By the end of the year the Po was frozen and the snow lay deep in Ferrara. The party started on December 29th. With Beatrice was her brother, Alfonso, who was to fetch his bride, Anna Sforza, sister of the Duke of Milan. The men went by sledge, the women in country carts till the river became navigable. Here were the barges that had been sent for them from Pavia. Beatrice dei Contari, one of Isabella's characteristically lively ladies-in-waiting, wrote an amusing account of the journey to the Marquis of Mantua. The cold was intense and, to make matters worse, the barge with the food did not appear owing to the weather. Had not Madonna Camilla sent them some supper, "I should have been a saint in Paradise." The misery of the Marchesana, shivering in the cold, with no fire, drew tears from her eyes. At last she went to bed and bade her lady get in with her to warm her; "but I wished her Your Lordship, considering myself a poor substitute and ill

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able to warm her as Your Lordship does, *non avendo io il modo*". In fact, she adds, now that she is safe at Pavia enjoying the festivities, she is seriously thinking of making her will after all that she has gone through.

Below Pavia the Po and the Ticino meet and it was at this important strategic point that Giangaleazzo Visconti had built his great castle. Here the bride landed and was met by Ludovico. They were married very quietly in the castle chapel on January 17th. Even the Duke and Duchess of Milan were not present. From a letter of Ercole to his Duchess it appears that on this occasion too "the result which we had desired had not followed". But he bids his wife have no fear. Ludovico may have refrained because of the girl's innocence and timidity and the true love that he bears her and from the great desire he has not to distress her. Doubtless, he adds, he was waiting for a favourable day, as suggested by Ambrogio da Rosate.¹ Professor Gardner gathers from letters that the Duchess, a daughter of Ferrante, started by no means well disposed towards Ludovico, but had been completely won over by his kindness and courtesy.

Ludovico returned immediately to Milan to superintend the preparations there. The bridal party was left in charge of Galeazzo da Sanseverino, who quickly made himself as popular with the Duchess of Bari as he had long been with the Duke. His child wife, Bianca, who, in spite of her tender years, had her own household and was present at all great functions, became the inseparable companion of Beatrice, who took a great liking to her.

Ludovico was determined to leave nothing undone to make a splendid home for his wife. He had issued a decree to the governors of the chief cities, bidding them send all painters residing in them to Milan to work on the Sala della Balla and elsewhere in the

¹ Gardner, *Dukes and Poets in Ferrara*, p. 222, note.

castle. Those who obeyed were to be richly rewarded ; the others were to be fined and threatened with the loss of the Duke's favour. Signor Malaguzzi-Valeri holds that the Leonardo mentioned is not da Vinci, as he was too important to be included in a list of artists of such inferior fame. The roof of the Sala della Balla was decorated in blue and gold—and at that time lapis lazuli was almost as costly as the precious metals—to resemble the starry heavens, while the heroic achievements of Francesco Sforza were displayed on canvasses hung round the walls. Ludovico liked to glorify his father. Says Cagnola : “ That glorious and magnanimous prince embellished the castle of Porta Giovia in Milan with marvellous and beautiful buildings and the square that is in front of the said castle he had enlarged ; and in the streets of the city he had all the obstructions removed and he had them painted, decorated and beautified ; and the same he did for the city of Pavia ; wherefore, though at first they were called ugly and dirty cities, now they may be called most beautiful ; a worthy achievement, honourable and deserving of high praise, especially from those who saw them before and see them as they are to-day.” The fresco of Gian Galeazzo reading Cicero—or rather toying with a volume of his works—now in the Wallace Collection, must have been painted about this time.

On January 21st Beatrice entered Milan, being welcomed outside the city by her old playmate and cousin, the Duchess of Milan. At the city gate she was met by the two Dukes. Ludovico was wearing a splendid doublet of cloth of gold. They were escorted by the chief nobles, who vied with each other in the richness of their attire, while forty-six pairs of trumpeters sounded a joyous fanfare such as delighted the strong nerves of the Renaissance. The dense throngs crowded round the ladies of Ferrara, more especially round the bride. The houses, when

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not painted outside, were hung with costly brocades and festooned with greenery. The most notable display was given by the armourers, the special pride of Milan. Down each side of their street stretched a line of figures on horseback, completely clad, like their horses, in the best armour the city could produce, so realistic that they might have been alive. Bona of Savoy and her daughter, Bianca Maria, welcomed Beatrice at the castle.

The most important of the festivities was the tournament which began on the 26th. In this Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Isabella's husband, played a prominent part, but in disguise. He had refrained from coming to the wedding officially, because his allies, the Venetians, looked askance upon the growing intimacy between Milan and Ferrara. When he heard of his presence, the Duke of Bari insisted on the Marquis joining his party and appearing at the wedding banquet. As usual Galeazzo Sanseverino carried off the first prize, a length of cloth of gold. The Duke of Milan wrote an enthusiastic description of the jousting to his uncle Ascanio in Rome, bidding him tell the Pope all about it.

The knights wore fancy dress. The Bologna contingent, led by Annibale Bentivoglio, the husband of the bride's illegitimate sister, Lucrezia, was drawn into the lists by stags and a unicorn, the d'Este beasts, on a triumphal car. Gaspare Sanseverino Fracassa, brother of Galeazzo, came in with twelve knights from Milan dressed in Moorish costumes of black and gold with the symbolical Moor's head on their shields. Those in Galeazzo's squadron, who were disguised as wild men, threw off their costumes and appeared in magnificent armour when they stood in front of the dukes and their duchesses. A gigantic Moor then came forward and celebrated Beatrice's praises in verse.

Leonardo da Vinci designed the dresses of these wild men, as is proved by a note in the Codex

Atlanticus. He was at the house of Galeazzo Sanseverino, arranging the *fiesta* of his joust, when his rascally boy Giacomo, who was for ever robbing him, stole the money in a purse which one of the men-at-arms had put on the bed from the doublet he had taken off. A rare master, Paolo Giovio calls him : "inventor of all elegances and especially of pleasing stage spectacles, skilled also in music, playing upon the lute and singing most sweetly, he became dear in a high degree to all the princes who knew him."

"There can be no doubt that art, literature, science and trade received from Ludovico a stimulus such as Florence alone equalled and surpassed, thanks to the Magnifico and, even more, to the refined atmosphere of Florence, which was little affected by absorption in industry and trade on a large scale and was thus more able to fall in readily with the rapid march of the new ideas." So says Signor Malaguzzi-Valeri, who cannot speak too highly of the charm, the taste and very adequateness of all that went to beautify the Lombard house "during that blessed period, when society displays in all its manifestations its aspiration towards an ideal not completely realized. In the furniture and plate, in the terracotta ornaments of the windows, as in the commonest utensils, the divine art of the Renaissance triumphantly asserts itself."

That Il Moro partly from taste, partly from vanity, partly for political reasons, gave this movement a powerful fillip the same authority does not deny, but he has no illusions about the status of the artists. They were treated little better than other workmen. They were bound hand and foot by their contracts, which went into minute details about the subjects of the pictures, the size and number of the figures, their clothes and the colours to be used ; and the work was generally given to the lowest bidder. Priests and monks, the best patrons after ruling princes, were particularly hard and unintelligent task-masters.

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Money was difficult to come by. Artists in Ludovico's employ were continually appealing for their salaries, which, as the drain on his purse increased, were often long in arrear. Though he readily intervened to compel his subjects to pay up, he was often unable to do so himself. The university professors were in no better case.

Leonardo da Vinci appears to have come to Milan from Florence about 1482-3. Various reasons have been suggested for the move, as that Lorenzo dei Medici was glad to be rid of this pupil of Verrocchio with the ever-restless mind who produced so little and therefore sent him to Ludovico when he asked for someone to make the equestrian statue of his father upon which he had set his heart. There is also the story of Lorenzo sending him with the silver lute upon which he played divinely. More probably he came of his own accord, attracted by the splendour of the court and by the reputation of Il Moro as a Maecenas, in the hope of bettering his fortunes.

The remarkable letter in which he introduced himself does not suggest that he came with a commission. Milan was at war and clearly Leonardo thought that he would prove more useful as an engineer than as an artist. There is something almost sublime about the all-embracing confidence, corresponding as it does with the vast range of his genius, as yet quite untried in the field of engineering. He can, among other things, build light, portable bridges, or burn the bridges of the enemy, prepare war-machines, destroy any fortress or construct every kind of warlike instrument, including the most powerful artillery. In architecture or painting he can compete with anyone. "I can also conduct water from one place to another in canals. Moreover, I can carry out works in sculpture, marble, bronze or terracotta. . . . Also I can undertake to make the bronze horse and monument that will rebound to the



[Alinari Photo]

LUDOVICO SFORZA

Detail from the altar-piece attributed to Zenale

everlasting glory and eternal honour of my lord your father of blessed memory and the great House of Sforza."

Leonardo's first work in Milan appears to have been for the Prior of the Scuola della Concezione. In this he was associated with the energetic, pushing, prosperous, practical Lombard Ambrogio de Predis. The contract, which goes into the minutest details, stipulates that the work shall be finished in eight months. Leonardo painted the altar-piece and Malaguzzi-Valeri holds that this is the copy of the Virgin of the Rocks in the National Gallery. The original, now in the Louvre, which Leonardo brought with him from Florence, was too large for the space allotted. It is thought to have been the picture that Ludovico presented to the Emperor Maximilian. There was a serious difference about the pay and at last, in 1492, the artists appealed to the Duke. The monks would give only 25 ducats for the picture, though Leonardo had had an offer of 100 ducats for it. Ludovico decided in favour of the artists. Thus they had, apparently, had to wait ten years for the money.

The great project which Ludovico had in mind and which he had inherited from his brother, Galeazzo Maria, was the equestrian statue of his father. In 1489 Pietro Alamanni, the Florentine ambassador, wrote to Lorenzo that Signor Ludovico intended to build a worthy monument to his father and had already asked Leonardo da Vinci to prepare a model, that is to say a gigantic horse in bronze with Duca Francesco in full armour upon it; and as His Excellency desires "*una cosa in superlativo grado*", he has requested him to write and ask that Lorenzo would send him a master or two able to carry out the work; for, though he has given the commission to Leonardo da Vinci, he seems to doubt his ability to complete it.

Ludovico must have been well aware of Leonardo's dilatory methods, which, however characteristic of his

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genius, were not likely to commend themselves to any patron, least of all to the definite, practical Moro. As Solmi puts it in his admirable study of Leonardo da Vinci, the best I have read, "If he undertakes to work upon a plan for a dome for the Cathedral of Milan, he at once loses himself in researches into the architectural and mechanical laws that condition all domes. If he undertakes to execute an equestrian monument to Francesco Sforza, his energies soon evaporate in investigations into animal anatomy or the question of fusing in several furnaces. The works are not completed, but the theory grows, increases, spreads in every direction, satisfies the insatiable craving of the artist and supplies him with the ideas for his treatises."

Leonardo spent the best years of his life at Milan. Here he had the leisure which was everything to him. Here he wrote the best of his books, including the remarkable treatise on painting, in his curious handwriting from right to left. Here, too, he completed his greatest works as an artist, about which there seems to cling the curious fatality that characterizes the man himself. The horse was never cast, the Last Supper is now a ruin and it is impossible to identify any of the Milanese portraits.

But Ludovico ended by returning to Leonardo, if he had ever definitely withdrawn the commission from him. In 1490 a note proves that the artist was starting a new model of the horse and the poets of Milan were soon singing its unfinished glories. The model, placed in the centre of the Piazza del Castello for the marriage of the young Duke of Milan in 1490, awakened unbounded admiration. Though a pupil of Verrocchio, Leonardo had a poor opinion of sculpture, considering that it is inferior to painting, except in durability, and requires less ability. It does not appear that the monument ever got beyond the horse. The casting of it would in any case have been a

difficult problem and as the finances of Milan went from bad to worse, it became clear that it was out of the question. Towards the end we find Leonardo writing to the Duke, "Of the horse I will say nothing, because I know the times. Do you remember the commission for painting the *camerini*? I would point out to Your Lordship that I have been without the salary, upon which I was to live with two masters, for two years." The model was still in existence in 1501, doubtless in the Corte Vecchia, where was Leonardo's studio, for Ercole d'Este tried to buy it then. It was already suffering from neglect and rumour says that it met its end at the hands of the Gascon archers, who used it as a target.

There appears to be very little truth in the legend which depicts Leonardo as a well-to-do gentleman painter living in easy circumstances with horses and servants at his command. His notes show that he was often hard put to it to find a few ducats and that his fare was frugal in the extreme. Though he later received a salary, when paid, from the Duke, his methods put him at a hopeless disadvantage when compared with Ambrogio de Predis, Bramante or his other more business-like brethren. But the magnetic personality of the man was irresistible. Vasari speaks of this rare combination of beauty, grace and genius "with the result that, wherever such a man may turn, his every action is so divine that, leaving all others far behind, it clearly stands out for what it is, something bestowed by God, not to be acquired by art". Such, he says, was Leonardo, who, in addition to a physical beauty that can never be sufficiently praised, possessed infinite grace in every one of his actions: and such was his ability that he could master any subject, no matter how difficult, upon which he concentrated his mind. His physical strength was equalled by his skill, while there was something majestic, even royal, about the whole man. His talk had a fascination that

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drew all men to him, and no one appreciated it more than Il Moro. According to Solmi, his manuscripts are invaluable for the light they throw upon the grace and wit of the court of Milan, where all kinds of verbal games, even riddles, were popular with the young Duchesses and more especially with Beatrice. Most of the *motti*, fables, allegories, prophecies and witticisms to be found in them have been received in the gloomy halls of the Castle with a merry echo of admiring laughter. "We have ample proof that princes and princesses, ladies and gentlemen, turned to Vinci's ready imagination to design some new costume or ornament, or devise some neat sentence or motto."

Ludovico was continually employing him or consulting him. In 1490, by which time he had learnt to appreciate his genius, he was sent to Pavia with another architect to report upon the newly-started cathedral there, in which Ascanio, then Bishop of Pavia, was particularly interested. As so often, this mission resulted in nothing definite. His notebooks show that the cathedral was but one of many interests that kept him lingering in Pavia till the end of the year. With him were pupils and friends, who readily followed him everywhere, and the rascally boy Giacomo, who habitually ate enough for two and committed enough mischief for four. Vinci delighted in the company of the men of learning, the professors of the university, as in the library of Pavia, and no doubt they reciprocated his delight. Indeed, he was intimate with the most important mathematicians and scholars of the time, as also with the leading figures in the art world. Bramante in particular was a close friend. Women do not appear to have counted for much in the life of Leonardo, but he liked comely youths about him. We read of his taking Salai into his service about 1494 "who was of the most attractive grace and beauty, having lovely, curling hair and

ringlets, which gave Leonardo great pleasure, and he taught him many things in art."

These months at Pavia, says Solmi, must have been some of the happiest in Vinci's life. He had leisure and every opportunity for devoting himself to the study of the endless subjects that interested him without let or hindrance in congenial company. These admirable paragraphs seem to me to go to the heart of the genius of the great Florentine :

"Leonardo is an expression of the character that is peculiar to the Italian Renaissance. This maintains that every man has within himself the reason of his own destiny and that he should bring it to fulfilment untrammelled by any ethical or social considerations. Born for scientific research, endowed with all the gifts of the researcher, he had turned aside with Perugino and Credi, with Verrocchio and Botticelli to the fruitful path of the practical and alone had lost his way in science. The need to make a living and the spirit of the time induced him for a moment to turn back to art, but his whole mental bent had once again drawn him to theoretical and abstract enquiries ; the continual repetition of this perpetual change weakens and spoils his work and his powers. His craving for knowledge, checked in Florence by the necessity of producing in order to live, hampered during the early years at Milan by the annoyance of an ambitious and energetic prince, had received, during the last years of the fifteenth century, its complete satisfaction." Leaving his brush to his pupils, he had thought and discussed science with the chief authorities of the day. "His researches into painting and architecture, military and civil, had first initiated him into the difficulties of abstract thought. It was not long before he soared beyond all limits and boldly made for the highest peaks of physiology and anatomy, mechanics and hydraulics." Much though he admired the mathematicians, he had little in common

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with the natural philosophers and professors of medicine, who still dealt largely in magic and astrology, whereas Leonardo consistently observed nature.¹

Not that Malaguzzi-Valeri will allow that Ludovico ever employed him as a practical engineer. He does not believe, for instance, that he built the pavilion and bath with hot and cold water for the Duchess of Milan at Pavia in 1490. His drawings were of a building there, which attracted his insatiable interest and curiosity. Nor was he ever actively engaged in the hydraulics and other undertakings at Vigevano. Again, his drawings only show his interest in all he saw there and at the model farm, La Sforzesca. It was not till much later that he may have acquired a practical knowledge of hydraulics.

But it was in the service of Il Moro that Leonardo produced his masterpiece as a painter. The Last Supper, hardly though it has fared at the hand of time, has been called the greatest picture in the world—"the synthesis of all the art and all the science of genius, in which the soul of Lombardy and of Italy felt an echo of its greatness and of its unhappiness." (Solmi.) It is painted on the wall of the Refectory of the church with which Il Moro and Beatrice will always be associated, S. Maria delle Grazie, and the fact that it was finished in not much more than a year, 1496-7, explains how the subject caught hold of Leonardo. Bandello's description of the great painter at work cannot be quoted too often. "He used, and I have often seen and watched him, to go early in the morning and mount the scaffolding, because the Last Supper is a good way above the floor: he would not put down the brush from sunrise till it grew dark for a moment, but continue painting, altogether oblivious of food and drink. Then for two, three or four days he would not put hand to it and yet he would spend an hour

¹ Solmi, *Leonardo*, pp. 121-2.

or two there during the day, examining and criticizing his figures. I have also seen him, when the whim seized him, start at midday, when the Sun is in the Lion, from the Corte Vecchia, where he was at work on that gigantic horse of clay, and come straight to Le Grazie and, mounting the scaffolding, seize his brush and give a touch or two to one of the figures, and immediately go off elsewhere."

From a letter of the Duke to Marchesino Stanga (June 29th, 1497) it is clear that the picture was already nearing completion at that date. The Duke intended to give Leonardo other important commissions. "Item, to ask Leonardo the Florentine to finish the work he has begun in the Refectory of Le Grazie in order to work on the other wall of the Refectory; and a contract must be drawn up and signed by him that will bind him to finish the work within the time agreed."

We also know that Leonardo was employed in some of the rooms of the Castle, though it is impossible to identify any of his work there now.

In 1498 Il Moro showed his appreciation of the great painter whose name sheds a unique lustre on his reign by giving him a garden of sixteen perches, as one who was second to none among the ancients or moderns in his art. It was outside Porta Vercellina. On the outbreak of war with Louis XII he was made an Ingegnere Camerale. On the fall of Ludovico he left Milan. Louis XII would gladly have removed the whole wall of the Refectory of S. Maria delle Grazie with the Last Supper to France, if it had been possible.

CHAPTER X

COURT LIFE AT MILAN UNDER LUDOVICO AND BEATRICE

Two things came out clearly from the wedding, firstly, that the Duke of Bari was charmed with the youth and life of his bride ; secondly, that there was no chance of the two Duchesses getting on together. From the very first Beatrice resented having to give way to her cousin and the ill-feeling between them became so pronounced that, according to Corio, it had not a little to do with bringing about the final catastrophe. Shortly after the wedding the Duchess of Milan was brought to bed of a boy. The news cannot have been welcome to the Bari couple. Though Isabella had of right the first place, Trotti understood how inferior her position really was. The fact that they were cousins and had been intimate from childhood made the situation still more difficult. Trotti records (May 12th, 1491) Isabella saying that she wished to be treated exactly like the Duchess of Bari and would be satisfied if Signor Ludovico behaved as though he had two wives or two daughters and treated them without any difference. She did not want a farthing more than the Duchess of Bari, but she went on to complain of all that Ludovico had given his wife from the treasure. Ludovico possessed some famous jewels, among them the balass ruby, called the Spino, valued at 25,000 ducats, a big ruby of 22 carats and a pearl of 29 carats, valued at 25,000 ducats.

The court of Ferrara was naturally most anxious for news. Trotti reassured them, writing on February 6th that Signor Ludovico had but one idea, how to

please and amuse his wife. Every day he told him how fond he was of her. But the Gallerani was still a danger. On February 14th he went to the castle and Ludovico, who treated him with the utmost confidence, told him "in his ear" that he was going to amuse himself with her and that his wife wished it. Nevertheless Beatrice resented the intimacy. She flatly declined to wear a dress of cloth of gold similar to one that Ludovico had given his mistress. On March 21st, 1492, when the Gallerani was with child, Ludovico told Trotti that he would have no more to do with her after it was born. On March 27th Trotti writes that Ludovico is quite devoted to his wife. He said that he took great pleasure in her ways and her charming manners, adding that, besides being joyous by nature, she was "*molto piacevolina e non mancho modesta*". On April 28th he relates how the two Duchesses have been playing *a le braxe*—having a boxing match—"and the Duke of Bari's wife has knocked down her of Milan". The contest was, unfortunately, only too symbolical. The boisterous, hoydenish spoilt child of sixteen was not likely to show much tact in her dealings with her cousin. One can quite believe the stories of her making fun of her at court ceremonies.

When the Gallerani's boy was born Ludovico told his wife that he had done with her and he kept his word. Shortly afterwards, in 1493, she was married to Count Bergamini. In 1497 Ludovico actually proposed to confer upon his son by her, Cesare, the vacant archbishopric of Milan, to the no small indignation of the clergy. But when the Prior of S. Maria della Grazie, a personal friend whom he held in high esteem, earnestly appealed to him not to do so, as the boy was far too young, he gave way. The Gallerani, respectably married, poetess, Humanist and popular hostess, soon appeared at court again. In 1497-8 we find her dining with Beatrice and her infant son, Francesco.

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Beatrice's ladies write in the same tone as Trotti. Polissena d'Este tells Isabella that she can send her the comforting news that Beatrice is well treated and perfectly happy. Her husband caresses her, fêtes her and gives her every pleasure possible. She is confident that he feels for her "a cordial love and good will. God grant that it may last". According to Galeazzo da Sanseverino, "such is the love between them that I do not think that two people could love one another more."

A curious result of the marriage was the genuine friendship that sprang up between Ludovico and Isabella d'Este, who was in character much better fitted to make him an understanding companion than her sister. She was "more refined, more truly cultured, more thoughtful than Beatrice", says Malaguzzi-Valeri, "and destined to play a more personal part in Italian politics." Not a few writers have wondered whether Ludovico's fate might have been different if she had been beside him to influence him. Wherever she went Isabella d'Este made an impression, just as she still does on readers of her letters. She also added Galeazzo da Sanseverino as well as Galeazzo Visconti to her list of friends. The old poem, *I Reali di Francia*, was still as popular and as seriously discussed as in the days of attendolo Sforza. Boiardo and Ariosto, the two great court poets of Ferrara, were to turn or were already turning these stories into immortal epics which are an idealized reflection of the courtly life and chivalry of their own day. The d'Este ladies and Galeazzo Visconti found that they took different sides when they fell to discussing the qualities of the paladins. Visconti came forward as the champion of the French knight, Orlando, while Isabella and Beatrice stood out for Rinaldo. So persuasive did Galeazzo prove, or so tactful were his adversaries, that on one occasion they acknowledged themselves beaten and renounced their

allegiance. Isabella, however, quickly returned to her old love, and the discussion was carried on by letter after her return to Mantua. Possibly it was in order to find material for her cause that she asked Boiardo for the manuscript of the later portions of his poem.

In spite of her youth, Isabella was a companion whom Ludovico could consult as well as one upon whom he could lean. He could turn to her as he had turned to his mother. A man of his character would instinctively look to a woman for sympathy and support. On March 12th, 1494, he wrote that he missed her dear company so much "that we confess that it will be like losing a part of ourselves when she goes to-morrow". Trotti declared that during the thirteen years he had spent in Milan he had never seen a guest of the Sforzas so honoured. Ludovico hardly ever left her side during her stay, making the ambassadors and the court follow in her train and give way to her, to the astonishment of the whole population, "and often in the evening His Highness drove through the gardens in a *carretta* with her". Ludovico was never promiscuous in his loves and it says something for him that he was capable of feeling genuine friendship for a woman so attractive in her way without, apparently, rousing a suspicion of jealousy in his wife, though Gonzaga did not quite relish the intimacy, which gave rise to some gossip. "Theirs was the calm friendship and sincere sympathy of two people who love luxury and art," writes Malaguzzi-Valeri. "They exchanged gifts and courtesies and gladly spent days and weeks together at Milan, in company with Beatrice or alone." The relations between the two courts now became very close. Ludovico instituted a weekly courier to Mantua. Thither he sent truffles, vegetables, and artichokes, receiving in return the excellent Garda trout, of which he was very fond.

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Beatrice had not the gift that makes Isabella's letters so curiously modern. Isabella sent her a description of the marriage of Anna Sforza to her brother, which had been celebrated with great festivities including the performance of two comedies of Plautus, for which Ferrara was famous. Beatrice said that the letter made her feel as if she had been there herself. So sure is she of her sister's affection that she can write, "I firmly believe that you really missed me sadly and that my absence took off not a little from the fun of the wedding. I will not deny that now that I am separated from Your Ladyship I do not feel so much that I am parted from a most affectionate sister, such as Your Ladyship has always been to me, but that I have lost a goodly part of myself."

Beatrice d'Este now became the Queen of the most brilliant court in Italy. Its splendour and its hunting parties were already famous, but she gave them an added zest and gaiety. Muralto describes her as very young, beautiful and of dark complexion, "an inventor of new costumes, dancing and amusing herself day and night", and, like all her family, she was no less interested in literature and art. Her vigorous, boisterous vitality completely captivated her more gentle, middle-aged husband, almost sweeping him off his feet. She was distinctly the stronger of the two, taking the lead in times of danger and probably exerting not a little influence in public matters.¹ "If the Duke of Bari, who had, in addition to the defects and vices, all the advantages of a prince of the Italian Renaissance, succeeded in playing a much more important part than his position warranted, this was due largely to his wife, vain in a thoroughly feminine

¹ Gaspare Visconti bears witness to her influence with Ludovicò, which he begs her to use on his behalf,

Tanta è la tua virtù, che ciò che vuoi
Dello invito suo cuor disponer puoi.

way, if you like, and cruel, especially with the Duchess Isabella, but resolute and tenacious in character, ready of wit and possessed of a mind alive to all the seductions of luxury and the charm of art."¹ Hard Beatrice often was. Just after her death the clown Fritella wrote to Isabella d'Este that he found it impossible to regret her owing to her pride and her feline nature. But she was the life and soul of the Milanese court. The eagerness with which she threw herself into every amusement has something of the hectic quality one associates with those who realize unconsciously that they are doomed to an early death. In this too she seems the living embodiment of the gay years before the storm.

Beatrice quickly developed a passion for hunting. Galeazzo da Sanseverino was her chosen squire on these expeditions, as on most occasions. Ludovico was too busy, nor was it probable that he shared his general's love of sport, though he enjoyed an occasional day out. On February 11th, 1491, Galeazzo da Sanseverino tells Isabella d'Este that they had been to Cusago, one of the Ducal castles near Milan. He was ordered into the *carretta* with the Duchess and Dioda, her tenor, a pet fool from Ferrara, for she was fond of singing and took some of her choir with her wherever she went. They sang a couple of dozen songs and played the fool so that he behaved more madly than Dioda. When they reached Cusago they netted the waters on a huge scale, catching a number of pike, lampreys and other fish, upon which they feasted royally. Then they sang and had a vigorous game of ball for the sake of their digestions. Next they explored the castle, upon which Ludovico was spending large sums. He was fond of it as it had been left him by his father. They found it really splendid, with a doorway of carved marble worthy of the Certosa itself. Then they tried their luck with the

¹ Renier, G. *Visconti, Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1886.

nets in another spot. They landed over a thousand trout, throwing back those they did not want for presents or for their own sacred stomachs. Afterwards they mounted their horses again and Galeazzo flew some of his falcons, bringing down a few birds by the river. Finally they hunted the deer, killing two, as well as a couple of fawns. They reached Milan an hour after sunset. Ludovico was much interested in their adventures, far more so, says Sanseverino, probably with truth, than if he had been there himself. He himself had cut his boots to pieces and torn his clothes, but he thinks that it will be a lucky day for Beatrice and that Ludovico will give her Cusago. He proved a true prophet. The beautifully illuminated deed of gift, with portraits of Ludovico and Beatrice, is now in the British Museum. In a letter describing the delights of Villanova, famous for its quails, Beatrice tells Isabella that she has had a whole field of garlic planted for her, so that she may eat her fill, since she is so fond of it. The digestions of the great ladies of the Renaissance were as a rule as healthy as those of their lords.

The happiest days of the great Lombard nobles were often spent at their villas round Milan. One gathers as much from Bandello. Marchesino Stanga, one of Ludovico's most trusted ministers, who was President of the Corn Office and the Treasury, and managed to make himself popular in both these thankless posts, was probably the first to build a castle so far afield as Bellagio, on Lake Como. Tiraboschi, by the way, calls him "the organ and the channel through which passed the favours and all the business of the state". Ludovico, like all the Sforzas, shared these tastes and was never so happy as when leading a family life at one of his beautiful castles, with the red glow of their warm Lombard terracotta standing boldly out above their wide domains. His favourite was his birthplace just outside Milan,

Vigevano, where Bramante's tower still stands. He lavished money both on the castle and the town, which owes its handsome arcaded market-square to him. The best description of the district is to be found in a letter from the Marchesana Isabella to her husband (August 27th, 1492): "To-day there was a hunt about two miles from here in the most perfect spot I think Nature could devise for such a sight. The animals were in a wooded valley, near the Ticino: a portion of it had been enclosed and here were shut in a number of head of game. Driven out by stones, they were obliged to cross an arm of the Ticino and go up the hill, where we ladies were seated on a platform. The others were in shelters made of green cloth and boughs. Every movement of the animals could be seen from the valley and the wood, right up to the slope, where there was a fine stretch of country. When they reached it, the dogs were loosed and we watched them run as far as the eye could follow. Below we saw a number of stags cross the river, but only two came up the hill and they ran so far that we could not see them killed. Don Alfonso and Messer Galeazzo followed them and wounded them. Then a doe came by with her fawn. The dogs were not loosed upon them. There were a number of pigs and fawns, but only one of each came up the hill and was killed right in front of us. The fawn fell to the honour of my banner. Lastly a vixen came by. Her astonishing gambols much amused the company, but she was not clever enough to escape, following the others to the slaughter."

This was the park which Ludovico laid out and stocked with game. It stretched from his model farm, La Sforzesca, right down to the Ticino. The rather arbitrary methods with which he acquired the necessary land did not add to his popularity. The Sforzesca was a universal source of admiration to all visitors, including the French, and was also profitable

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to its owner. Here he carried out experiments in growing and breeding, importing a number of sheep from France. It was managed on the most strictly scientific and economic lines. The chief cause of its fertility was the system of irrigation he introduced, the centre of which was the Naviglio Sforzesco from the Ticino. Hitherto much of the land had been useless from lack of water. It seems more probable that the sketches in Leonardo's note-books are studies of it than that he played a part in its construction. The farm at Vigevano Ludovico also gave to his wife and, after her death, to the Dominicans of S. Maria delle Grazie. Here it was that he began the Servite church of S. Maria della Bestemmie—S. Mary of the Curses—so called because the funds came from the fines imposed for blaspheming the Virgin and the saints. It was completed by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, who became lord of Vigevano after the French conquest.

At Vigevano and Cusago were the largest stocks of big game. Nothing impressed Ludovico more than his wife's fearlessness. At Cusago, when an angry boar at bay had gored several dogs, she ran in and wounded it and the others finished it off. Several instances of Beatrice's courage are given by Luzio and Renier in their invaluable study.¹ Ludovico describes her at a wolf hunt to Isabella, saying that, with all her spirit, he doubted whether she would have carried off the palm from her sister. "However, such is the longing I have to see you and put the courage of you both to the test, that it seems a thousand years till your return." Again, a wounded deer charged the horse Beatrice was riding, lifting it a good spear's length from the ground, "but she kept her seat and sat erect all the time. When the Duke and Duchess and I ran up to help her, she only laughed."

The two young Duchesses were a good deal together. They raced each other on horseback or galloped up

¹ *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1870.

behind their ladies in the hope of frightening them into falling off. Indeed, Ludovico writes to Isabella that he could not tell her a thousandth part of the tricks they play or the fun they have. Now that they are back in Milan, they are always inventing some fresh scheme. "As it was raining they went out with half a dozen women with cloths upon their heads through the streets to buy food." But it was not the custom in Milan to wear cloths, and some of the women they passed began to laugh at them. "My wife lost her temper and began to give it them roundly and it looked like ending in blows. They came back wringing wet and muddy, a pretty sight. I imagine that when Your Ladyship is here they will go with an even better heart, because they will have you with them and you are spirited and if anyone dares to use bad language to them, Your Ladyship will protect them all and let them have it with the knife." At Pavia once they decided to masquerade in Turkish costumes and Beatrice sat up and finished them in a single night. When the Duchess of Milan expressed astonishment at seeing her sewing away like an old woman, she answered that, when there was anything to be done, whether in jest or in earnest, she went at it with all her might, doing her best to make certain that it should be done well. The answer helps to explain the superiority of the ladies of Ferrara to most of their contemporaries.

Obviously all this romping was inspired by Beatrice. Whatever appearances might suggest, the relations between the two Duchesses did not improve. The Duke of Milan became more and more of a nonentity. Isabella d'Este's husband, who strongly disapproved of the mad goings on at the court of Milan, described in disgust how on one occasion, when Gian Galeazzo was left behind at a hunt, no one paid the slightest attention to his absence, behaving just as if he did not exist. Trotti writes of the Dukes and their Duchesses

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going Maying, in accordance with the Lombard custom, on May Day, 1492, with their falcons and a goodly company, of which he was one. The hats of the Duchesses were in the French style, studded with jewels, "but the pearls of the Duchess of Bari were much larger and finer than those of the Duchess of Milan". Trotti describes their dresses in great detail. Their ladies were dressed in the same style, but had no jewels.

The good-natured Trotti was something of a butt at the court. In the carnival of 1485 Ludovico burst in upon him with a hundred masks and made him give them a Milanese supper, afterwards sending him a whole cheese by way of compensation. But with the advent of the merciless little sportswoman, Beatrice, her father's ambassador had a much worse time. In an evil moment he owned that he hated fox and wolf cubs because "they smell and bite". At Vigevano Ludovico used to make the peasants bring him as many as they could, because they were very destructive. He now had them put in sacks and baskets and sent to Trotti. It would take his household the whole day to catch them. Even in Milan he was not safe. Ludovico sent them on there and had them let loose in his garden, where they killed all his chickens. He complained that it took three or four hours to kill them off, as they jumped like devils at his face. Ludovico made him describe these practical jokes in his despatches to Ferrara.

Burckhard's judgment upon Il Moro is well known: "the most perfect type of the despot of that age, and, as a kind of natural product, he almost disarms our moral judgment. Notwithstanding the profound immorality of the means he employed, he used them with perfect ingenuousness; no one would probably have been more astonished than himself to learn that a human being is morally responsible for the choice of means as well as of ends."

UNDER LUDOVICO AND BEATRICE

Ludovico showed the Visconti gift for administration in the skill with which he organized his state, though his extravagance and the cost of the wars in which he became involved rapidly impaired his finances. On the whole he chose his ministers well. Marchesino Stanga has been mentioned. His principal secretary was Bartolomeo Calco, who was to Il Moro something of what Cicco had been to his father. He was a man of great capacity and wide experience—"a man of the highest character, absolutely honourable, and kindly", says Corio. Through his hands passed all the correspondence with ambassadors and foreign courts, as well as most of his master's communications with artists and others in his employ. It was his duty to open all letters coming from plague-stricken districts.

The plague was a source of great anxiety at this time. Ludovico was unremitting in his efforts to combat it. In times of famine and plague, says Giovio, he paid every attention to the food supply and to promoting health. In 1485 there was a terrible outbreak and it was during his enforced confinement then that Corio began his history of Milan. In a city of 300,000 inhabitants it made fearful ravages, carrying off some 50,000. To Ludovico Sforza Milan owed its great plague *lazzeretto*, which was begun after his recovery from his serious illness in 1488. Like other princes of the day in Italy, he endeavoured to let light and air into the streets by removing the bulks and stalls and other obstructions, broadening them whenever possible. Possibly he may have talked vaguely of rebuilding Milan and to his remarks we may owe Leonardo's plan for an ideal city. This must be built near a river, which must be kept at the same level by locks. The inhabitants must not be allowed to pack themselves in crowded houses, like so many goats, filling every corner with foul stench and sowing the seeds of pestilence and death. Everywhere there must

be light and air and he enunciates the principle that roads should be as broad as the average height of the houses. There should be two kinds of streets, upper and lower. The upper streets are to be kept for the use of pedestrians and light traffic and are to be neat and elegant ; the lower are for commercial and heavy vehicles, and at the back doors of the houses that give on these roads all the dust and rubbish are to be deposited, while by the front doors all goods are to be left. These lower streets are to be cleaned regularly by water from the river. Leonardo's eager imagination goes into further details, clean stables, well-arranged and airy rooms, even fireplaces always alight.¹

Another important secretary was Jacopo Antiquario, scholar and Humanist, intimate and patron of Humanists, a valued friend of Aldus Manutius, the great printer of Venice. He was Ludovico's right hand in all that concerned learning and matters ecclesiastical. Giovanni da Bellinzona was responsible for the judicial system. Ludovico's letter of advice to his sons on the administration shows that he had as clear a grasp of a well-organized civil service as the great Giangaleazzo Visconti. He insists upon the necessity of choosing servants well and treating them better, stimulating their ambition by rewarding them and promoting them regularly.

Ambrogio da Rosate was another personality of great influence at this court where everything was done in accordance with astrology. In a speech made after the recovery of Novara in 1500 Ludovico justified his reliance upon astrology by saying that he first prayed to God and then turned to the stars for guidance in avoiding evil and choosing good. His captains might not take the oath of allegiance except at the favourable astrological moment, *in punto d'astrologia*.

¹ Solmi, *Leonardo*, p. 50.

True to the traditions of his House, Ludovico did his best to encourage learning and was seconded in his efforts by his secretaries and many of the nobility. The Nuncio, Gherardi, was impressed by the number of scholars in Milan with whom he could converse on learned subjects. He told the Pope (February 12th, 1490) that these princes encourage art and learning and take care that the young men, hitherto wholly given up to trade and handicrafts, should also learn Greek and Latin. Nor are the usual trades neglected on that account; on the contrary, they expand daily. And he adds that exercise in arms and riding are also encouraged.

The University of Pavia was in a bad state. Many of the professors refused to lecture, as they were not paid, while the students appear to have gone beyond the very wide limits allowed to their kind in the Renaissance. Ludovico went so far as to address them a sharp letter upon their conduct from Vigevano (April 7th, 1488), beginning, "Every day we are told of some disgraceful action committed by you students in this city. Quite recently, during Holy Week, your behaviour towards a citizen and gentleman of Pavia was so scandalous that it cannot be tolerated, nor do we intend to tolerate it. We are of opinion that colleges are for study. By studying a man learns and by learning he comes to understand the end of good living and by living well and by learning a man wins praise and glory. We fail to see that human and divine law, which are taught daily in college, have produced any good results" after such behaviour, more especially in Holy Week. Such want of reverence and respect he has no intention of permitting. If they persist in their insolent behaviour, he will make an example of the students. In future all such disorderly conduct will be ruthlessly punished. Such a letter from a ruling prince in the fifteenth century must be almost unique. It shows how genuine was

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Il Moro's interest both in the University of Pavia and in the training of good scholars.

The greatest service he did the university was to bring the various schools, which had hitherto been scattered about in different quarters of the city, into a single building, the Ateneo. This had two main divisions, one for the Medical School, the other for Law and Theology. The reform was effected in 1489. The reputation of the university rose rapidly. Students were attracted from all parts of Europe. The most distinguished of the professors was Giasone del Maino, who lectured on law for forty-eight years with the princely salary of 2,250 florins. Louis XII of France once took his place among the students to hear him lecture. Ambrogio Varese da Rosate held the Chair of Astrology and shared the honours of the medical school with Giovanni Marliani, who was looked upon as a marvel of scientific attainments, when medicine had not yet shaken off its alliance with astrology and magic. In fact there were no fewer than ninety professors and lecturers at Pavia teaching and lecturing there in the best days of Il Moro. Many of them belonged to the leading families of Milan, though here, as in other spheres during the Renaissance, birth counted for very little. Perhaps the most interesting and daring appointment was that of the Jew, Benedetto Ispano, who was made Professor of Hebrew. But in 1491 his Chair was abolished, as it did not attract enough students to make it worth maintaining. As the ducal finances grew worse the professors, like the artists and other officials, often had to wait for their salaries.

Good and devout Catholic though he was, Il Moro was very tolerant, notably towards the Jews. Anyone mocking them was liable to a fine of twenty-five ducats and four jerks with the strappado. He even encouraged a Jew, called Solomon, to translate some Hebrew manuscripts into Latin, allowing him to live in the

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castle of Pavia in order that he might work more conveniently in the library there.

In Milan also he founded a college, where the great Chalcondylas, a fugitive from the Turks, taught Greek for many years, Merula, a famous professor, rhetoric, and Gafusio music. The tradition of good music lived on at the Milanese court. Singers were still engaged from Flanders, which was then the great centre, and the choir was as good as any in Italy at a time when it was the fashion for princes to lavish money upon choristers and singers.

Great nobles and court officials followed in the footsteps of their lord, notably Calco, who established a school in Milan where Greek and Latin were taught free to poor scholars. It is not surprising that Politian looked on Ludovico as a friend and spoke highly of him as a patron of learning. Tiraboschi is actually inclined to regard him as the best prince that ever was, perhaps a pardonable exaggeration in a scholar.

Ludovico also did much for the library at Pavia, which almost became, according to Magenta, a centre of study. The books and manuscripts were catalogued by his orders. He not only lent books to students, or rather to scholars, against reasonable guarantees, but also allowed them to be copied. He sent to Provence and elsewhere to find additional manuscripts and have others copied. He readily encouraged Corio, Tristano Calco and other historians in their work, helping them with the loan of manuscripts and trying to borrow others for them.

If Milan won an added lustre from the artists and architects, notably Leonardo da Vinci and Bramante, whom Ludovico attracted to his court, the same cannot be said of the poets and men of letters. These owe such interest as they have rather to the light they shed upon the life of the day than to their intrinsic merits. Of the poets Bernardo Bellincioni was the best. He

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was a Florentine whom Lorenzo dei Medici had not thought worth rewarding; incidentally, he was a much better poet himself. It is thought that Ludovico made his acquaintance during his own exile at Pisa and invited him to come to Milan in the hope that "by his Tuscan accent and witty, polished and facile rhymes" the city of Milan might set about pruning and polishing its rather rough dialect, of the defects of which its more cultured inhabitants were often painfully aware.¹ Before his coming hardly anyone, his editor informs us, knew what a sonnet meant, whereas those who could write them were soon to be counted by the score. Bellincioni, who was almost as much a buffoon as a poet, had the ready wit and keen brain of the Florentine, as well as the absolute lack of moral principle that one finds in the world of Guicciardini. Many of his poems are in praise of someone and abound in the most fulsome flattery. Naturally Ludovico comes in for his full share. Bellincioni's admiration for his patron was perfectly genuine. In him he saw the master in the arts in which he would have liked to excel himself. And it must be admitted that in this he was merely expressing the general view in Italy. "There is a time to open one's eyes and appear blind, to throw a stone and hide one's hand, to pretend to be asleep and tread quietly, like a cat, as you can do so well; ah, tell me how you do it"; and he ends the sonnet by saying that "Il Moro is to-day the true Messiah of Italy". Elsewhere, we are told, he has both the lion and the fox,—the qualities which Machiavelli was to consider essential for a tyrant—nor does he spread his net for flies. He is like the falcon, waiting the moment to pounce. To this poet he can do no wrong. In nothing is he more wise than in opening the Alps, which he had closed against them, to the French.

¹ Dina, *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1882.

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Bellincioni, with his lively buffoonery, was popular with the young Duke and Duchess of Milan. He had been with the company that had brought her from Naples and had sung the miseries of the voyage back. They liked to have him at Pavia. Clearly, like everyone else, he respected Isabella d'Aragona: "angelic beauty, proud in appearance, grave and compassionate in deed, lofty of speech", in her, he says, we seem to have another Ippolita Sforza.¹

We find him apologizing for keeping her up late with his chatter and fooling, or thanking Gian Galeazzo for a present. Bellincioni seems to have been well rewarded by his patrons, whether at court or among the nobles, for the flattering sonnets he scattered among them.²

Nor does he forget his true patron, even in his poems to the young Duke of Milan, whom he likens to Apollo for his fair hair. When he praises his handsome face, full of gentleness, he rarely fails to put in a word for the excellent uncle who relieves him from all cares of State, ending a sonnet, for instance,

Non manca, o bella coppia, cosa alcuna,
Se non qui il vostro patre Ludovico,

—nothing is lacking but their "father" Ludovico. Bellincioni was on very familiar terms with Il Moro, but there is no reason for thinking that he wrote as he did to order. This was the tone of the court. References to the good deeds of the uncle are common.

¹ Angeliche sembianze, in vista altera,
Atti gravi, pietosi, alte parole,
Si che Natura in Lei render ci vuole
Ippolita, per cui il ciel si spera.

² Bellincioni was the librettist of Milan. This might come from an eighteenth century opera.

Cantiam tutti, viva 'l Moro,
Viva Il Moro e Beatrice :
Ben si può tener felice
Chi lei serve e'l sacro Moro.
Cantiam tutti, Viva 'l Moro !

There is, for example, the allegory on the first page of the beautifully illuminated manuscript of Simonetta's *Storia di Francesco Sforza*, which, like many other books from the Castle of Pavia, is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, for the library was sent to France by Louis XII. There is a ship steered by a Moor on one side, a mulberry tree spreading its protecting branches on the other, while Gian Galeazzo and his uncle are kneeling in the foreground. "While you live, I live safe and happy," says Gian Galeazzo in Latin; and Ludovico answers, "Be happy, my son; I will always be your protector." Even Leonardo devised several verbal allegories, in which a Moor is the leading figure, on the same lines.

Gaspare Visconti, a noble of distinction who had married Cicco Simonetta's daughter, was a popular figure at court. A great admirer of Petrarch, as was then the fashion, he could turn a graceful sonnet better than most of his rivals at Milan in the amatory style of his master, which was then all the rage among writers of drawing-room verse. He was a warm friend and protector of Bramante, who, like Michelangelo, seems to have been a great lover of Dante. He addressed a sonnet to Bramante on the respective merits of Dante and Petrarch, saying that he did not pretend to decide between two spirits so great, but only to twit Bramante, the whole-hearted champion of Dante. Bramante could also produce a set of verses on occasion and hold his own in the duels of the wits of Milan.

There was no love lost between the courtly poets of Milan and the Florentines at court like Bellincioni or Antonio Cammelli da Pistoia. Their sharp tongues and rather vulgar buffoonery grated on the aristocratic ears of their rivals, who often gave them as good as they got.

Then there was Niccolò da Correggio, a devoted friend of Isabella d'Este, whom he called the first lady

in the world. His mother was a bastard daughter of the House of Este. It was said of her that, if you would behold the Earthly Paradise, you should see Madonna Beatrice at a fête, though the saying has also been referred to the Duchess of Bari. It was a sad blow for Isabella when Niccolò began to pay court to her hated rival and sister-in-law, Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara. Though no great poet, he was, according to Luzio and Renier, a typical knight of the Renaissance, "delighting in arms, in the arts and in gallantry, as in all kinds of splendour and luxury. He was a clever diplomatist, whom Ludovico often sent on missions, popular with the ladies for his easy, charming manners, liked by princes for his sound sense, his skill and his courage, and by the public for his open-handed generosity and his excellence in jousting and in every kind of display." He is singled out for praise by Ariosto. As his mother's second husband was Tristano, the bastard son of Francesco Sforza, she settled at Milan, where her son became well known. He was born about 1440 and was liked by Galeazzo Maria, but even more by Ludovico. After 1490 he made Milan his home and became intimate with Ludovico, who sent him on a mission to France. He wrote the play *Cefalo*, which was produced at Ferrara. In 1493 his pastoral play, *Mopsa e Dafnesa*, was acted in Milan. On the fall of Il Moro he retired to Ferrara. He married Carmagnola's daughter, Cassandra, and had been a good soldier in his younger days. He took part in several wars and was captured during the War of Ferrara and imprisoned in Venice.¹ Such was his enthusiasm for Petrarch that he made a pilgrimage to the poet's favourite woodland retreat of Selva Piana, outside Parma.

Beatrice d'Este both respected and enjoyed good literature. Her secretary Calmetta records that in her spare time at Milan she would call upon Antonio

¹ *Giorn. Stor. Letter. Ital.*, Vol. 21.

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Grifo, or another equally competent scholar, to read and explain the *Divina Commedia* or the work of some other good Italian poet for her. The Duke of Bari liked to drop into her rooms on these occasions, finding it a great relaxation from State affairs. During his imprisonment in France he asked for a Dante to study. The lively girl princess from Ferrara took as much delight in the company of Niccolò da Correggio or Gaspare Visconti as in scampering across country or hawking with Galeazzo Sanseverino. Though she was in the flower of her youth, says the devoted Calmetta, "she was endowed with a brain so clear, with such affability, grace, liberality and generosity, that she could hold her own with any woman of the ancient world whatsoever, for she had not a thought but for laudable things." What more could the most exacting critic of the Renaissance ask than that his heroine should rival any Greek or Roman woman of them all? The Duchess of Milan seems to have been forced to content herself with Bellincioni.

The election of the Borgia Pope Alexander VI caused great rejoicing at the court of Milan. He owed the tiara almost entirely to Ascanio, who, seeing that there was no chance of his obtaining the prize himself, threw all his weight into the scale of Rodrigo Borgia. His rewards had been princely, even for those days of flagrant simony, among them being the Vice-Chancellorship, the castle of Nepi, and the Borgia's own palace. Isabella d'Este happened to be in Milan at the time of the election, as always, a popular and welcome guest. After dinner Ludovico dismissed everyone except the Duke and Duchess of Milan and Isabella's own ladies. He then read a letter from his ambassador in Rome, who described how the Pope had sent for him and said, "Mark what I say. I acknowledge that I have been made Pope through Monsigno Ascanio, contrary to general expectation, in a manner truly miraculous, and I am determined to be

the most grateful Pope that ever was. I mean that he shall sit in my chair and dispose of my estate, both spiritual and temporal, as though he were myself," with other affectionate remarks in the same strain. We are told of Alexander writing off to Ascanio, saying that it seemed a thousand years since he had seen him, when they had not met for half a day. The Borgia was behaving with his usual gushing exuberance under a strong emotion and was for the moment perfectly sincere. In the interview that followed he announced that he was determined to remain on the most cordial terms with Ludovico, taking his advice in all matters, and he wished he were seated on his throne.

All this excitement resulted in Beatrice, whose confinement was drawing near, becoming seriously ill. Ludovico hardly left her for a moment. In January, 1493, she gave birth to a boy, who was christened Ercole; but he was afterwards known as Massimiliano at the request of the Emperor Maximilian, who took a fancy to him when he visited Vigevano. Il Moro was beside himself with joy. The ringing of bells and other festivities were, as everyone remarked, far greater than they had been at the birth of the Count of Pavia. Debtors were released and there were many processions. The Duchess of Milan was brought to bed of a daughter about the same time.

The extravagance and luxury displayed by the Duke and Duchess of Bari for the occasion went beyond all bounds. Beatrice's apartments were in the Rocchetta of the Castle of Milan, on the ground floor, to the left. They were very small, but the more easily heated on that account. The room for the child had been lined with wood, to keep out the draughts in the airy halls of the Castle. The cradle was gilded; the canopy, which was of blue silk fringed with gold, rested on four gilt columns; the quilt was, of course, of cloth of gold. A lady-in-waiting who sent Isabella of

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Mantua full details—no one knew better how to provide herself with thoroughly capable correspondents—complains bitterly of having to spend the whole day in the dismal rooms of the Duchess “which seem to me like the abode of the great Devil”. Bramante was called in to help provide *qualche degna fantasia* to be staged for the occasion. The two Duchesses left their beds at the hour recommended by Ambrogio da Rosate *in punto d’astrologia*. They attended a Te Deum in full state at S. Maria delle Grazie. Beatrice then went to Vigevano with her husband and the infant and her mother, the Duchess Leonora of Ferrara, who had come to Milan to be with her daughter. With them was Mariolo, a soldier and chamberlain of Il Moro, who served him also as a buffoon and a butt. He had already described to Isabella how, for a great hunt at Vigevano, Cardinal Sanseverino had shut up a tame boar in the game enclosure. When the animals were let out the rest of the party went after the wolves and goats, but Mariolo rode full tilt after the pig which he took for a wild boar, pursuing it vigorously till he was told the truth. Now Mariolo was commissioned to show the Duchess of Ferrara over Beatrice’s possessions. Her jewels alone were worth 150,000 ducats. Duchess Leonora described what she saw to her daughter Isabella. In the wardrobe were the eighty-four dresses Beatrice had had made since she had become Duchess of Bari. Her mother says it was like a sacristy filled with costly sacerdotal robes, so splendid were they. There were also two closets, one filled with glasses, porcelain, ivories, horns, dog-collars, game-bags and other hunting gear, like a well-stocked shop; the other full of perfumes and waters, with other delicate things in crystal and enamel, in the style of the vases of Signor Ludovico. There is just a touch of acid in the letter, for Leonora knew that Isabella, who, like herself, was comparatively poor,

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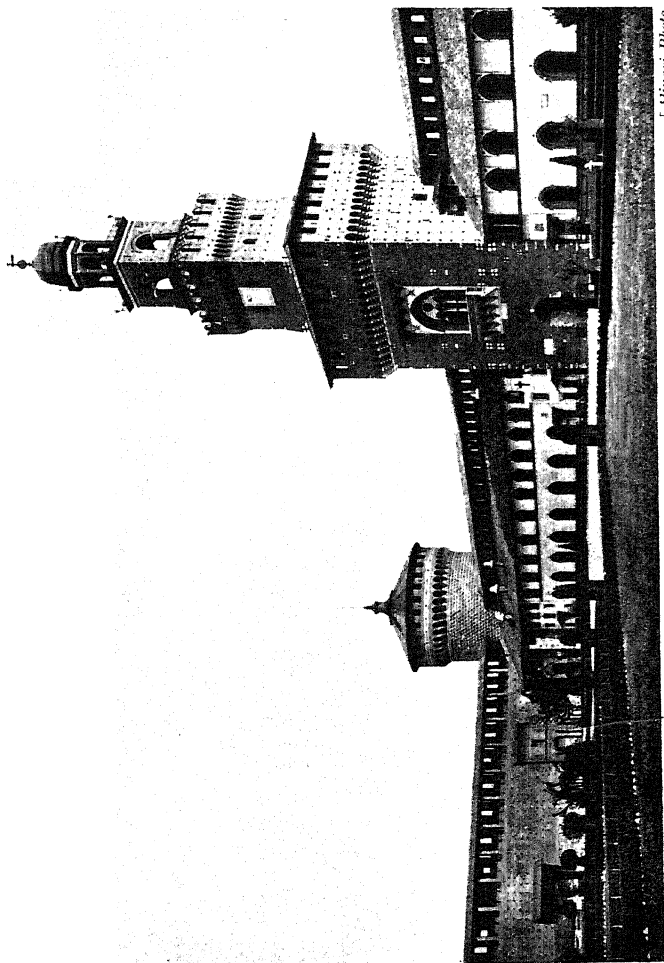
would share her feelings at such wealth and luxury. During one of her visits to Milan Isabella wrote regretfully to her husband, after being shown the large sums that had been recently added to Ludovico's treasure, "Would to God that we, who are so open-handed, had as much." Ludovico was ready to show his treasure, to impress people, if not, sometimes, perhaps, too ready. After some of the French envoys had seen it, they went away very discontented at the presents he had given them. Milan was, in fact, one of the richest states in Europe. Its revenue was valued at 700,000 ducats, which was almost as large as that of England, and more than half that of France at that time. Commynes considers that this was too high, and that, if Ludovico had been content with 600,000, his Duchy would not have been over-taxed.

CHAPTER XI

THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF LUDOVICO SFORZA

THE birth of Beatrice's son brought the inevitable crisis in Milan a distinct step nearer. Ludovico's feelings towards the Duchess of Milan were shared to the full by his wife. As Commynes, who knew all the parties concerned, puts it, Donna Isabella alone stood between Ludovico and the Duchy of Milan. Young, spirited and clever, she would gladly have fought for her husband's rights, but, says Commynes, "he was not wise and repeated what she told him". If he ventured to sulk for a moment it did not take his uncle long to recover the old ascendancy. Fond though he was of her, Gian Galeazzo, possibly when in liquor, did not always treat his wife too well. In 1492 the Marchesa of Montferrat wrote that there was no news, "except that the Duke of Milan has struck his wife".

She had other humiliations to put up with. In 1492 some of her servants were accused of trying to give a powder, which proved to be deadly poison, to Galeazzo Sanseverino and to Bozzone, the pet minion of her husband. Ludovico sent full information to Naples. Ferrante, Isabella's grandfather, was furious at the charge. He answered that the dragging in of Galeazzo Sanseverino was ridiculous. As for Bozzone, he was surprised that the Duchess had not had him made away with long ago. Ludovico was, in any case, altogether to blame. When the Duchess had complained to him about Bozzone, instead of getting rid of him, he had rewarded him. And most people will be inclined to agree with the old King of Naples.



[Atinari Photo]

THE COURTYARD, CASTELLO SFORZESCO, MILAN
(Restored)

Ludovico burst out against the Duchess of Milan to a special envoy from her grandfather. He said that she would like to see him out of power and dead and then rule herself, but neither the Duke of Milan, nor others would allow it. If she succeeded, she could never do for Milan what he had done, to the glory of the King of Naples and the Duke. He accused her of pride, cruelty, envy and malice, saying that she could not get on with him or her husband or the servants—all appointed by himself—and was always running into debt.¹

The birth of Beatrice's son and the elaborate official celebrations proved the last straw. Donna Isabella realized that Ludovico and Beatrice were more and more determined to seize the Dukedom. The result was that she wrote the letter in rather poor Latin to her father, which Corio gives in full. Many authorities consider that it is the work of the historian himself. However this may be, she undoubtedly did write to her father.

"It is many years, my father, since you married me to Gian Galeazzo with the idea that, when he reached man's estate, he should rule himself, as his father, Galeazzo, his grandfather, Francesco, and his Visconti ancestors had ruled. Though now of age and a father, he is still powerless in his kingdom and it is only by repeated requests that he can obtain the barest necessities from Ludovico and his ministers. All power is in the hands of Ludovico, while we, without help or money, live the lives of private citizens. . . . His wife has recently given birth to a son, whom everyone says he means to make Count of Pavia, in order that he may succeed to the Dukedom. All the honours of a prince were conferred upon his mother, while we and our children are treated with contempt, nor is it without risk to our lives that we remain in his power, since he might secretly make away with us in order

¹ Dina, *Is. d' Aragona, Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1921.

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strengthen the bonds between himself and Charles, and to this end he gave Belgioioso a letter from Henry VII of England, warning Ludovico of the danger of the claims of the Duke of Orleans to Milan and urging him to join a league against France. He also appears to have been ordered to sound Charles as to whether he could count on his help, if he were threatened by Naples. The alliance was thus to be purely defensive. Ludovico had no desire to see Charles in possession of Naples. The success of the mission was due not a little to the 8,000 ducats which Ludovico had given to be distributed among his friends in France, though he urged his envoys to spend less, if possible, and even to defer the payment for a year. The Scotsman, Stuart d'Aubigny, admitted quite frankly that, without the present, he should have felt it his duty to oppose the Milanese proposals. His wife received a valuable necklace in addition to her husband's honorarium. The results of the mission proved highly satisfactory. Charles even admitted Ludovico by name into the alliance with the Duke of Milan, thus regularizing his position and virtually assuring him of his support.

The death of Lorenzo dei Medici in April, 1492, was the most fatal of all blows to the cause of peace in Italy. His son Piero was quite incapable of dealing effectively with the difficult situation that was maturing.

Ludovico sought to strengthen himself still further by entering into a league with Venice and the Papacy. It was to confirm this alliance with the hereditary foe of Milan that Beatrice paid an official visit to the city of the lagoons. Ludovico thought it best not to go himself, as his relations with France were not yet definitely settled. Her sister Isabella was much perturbed at the news, for she also proposed visiting Venice. As she wrote to her husband, nothing would induce her to be there with the Duchess of Bari, "to be welcomed like a daughter or a maid, not like a stranger, with full ceremony". Fortunately she was

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able to get in her visit quietly before her sister swept down upon the lagoons in all her ducal splendour ; and Isabella, with her genuine artistic interests, thoroughly enjoyed sightseeing.

In May, 1493, Beatrice arrived at Ferrara on her way to Venice. Her luggage required ten carts and fifty mules. Isabella d'Este, as usual, was determined to be fully informed of every detail. Her correspondent, Prosperi, who was to perform this duty for her for several years, sent her the fullest details of her sister's costumes and jewels and of all that went on. Her mother was to accompany Beatrice to Venice and the rivalry between her and her daughter affected even their ladies. Leonora's lady, Teodora, wrote to Isabella that the Duchess of Ferrara had been induced to let all her ladies have gold chains and pearl rosaries a little more valuable than those of the contingent from Milan. Ludovico at once ordered much more handsome ones for all Beatrice's attendants. For he had gone with his wife and the infant Ercole to Ferrara, which, like Mantua, had joined the League. However, Teodora thought that they would certainly make a better show in Venice, since Leonora was having cloaks of green satin with black velvet stripes made for them all and was also taking a quantity of jewels with her to lend them on the spot. But Prosperi soon after informed Isabella that a jeweller from Milan had just appeared with rubies and diamonds for which Ludovico had paid 2,000 ducats.

A still bolder move, in which Beatrice may have played a part, was the sending of Erasmo Brasca to Maximilian, King of the Romans. He left Milan in May of this year, just when Ludovico and his wife started for Ferrara. The King of the Romans, it was suggested, should marry Bianca Maria, sister of the Duke of Milan, who was to have the huge dowry of 400,000 ducats. In return Maximilian was to invest Ludovico with the Duchy of Milan as soon as he

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became Emperor ; and the state of the health of the Emperor Frederic III made it clear that this event would not be long delayed. The Sforzas had never received the imperial investiture, but had been obliged to base their rights upon popular election, which the Emperors had steadily refused to recognize. To the impecunious Emperor the bribe was almost irresistible. There was some opposition to the bride on account of the very humble origin of the Sforzas, but Maximilian ended by consenting. Three-quarters of the dowry was to be paid at the time of the wedding, the other quarter when the investiture had been conferred. For the present the proposed investiture was to be kept secret. Thus Maximilian consented to marry the sister of Gian Galeazzo, the actual Duke of Milan, and accept 400,000 ducats from his hands on condition that he should oust him in favour of the uncle who was his guardian.

Beatrice went to Venice with some of her husband's most trusted counsellors, among them Gerolamo Tuttavilla and Galeazzo Visconti, who had been on the mission to France, Pietro Landriano and the old Bishop of Como. Her mother, Duchess Leonora, had with her her son, Alfonso, and his wife, Anna Sforza. They sailed down the Po on bucentaurs. Beatrice took with her her singers, among them her special pride, the tenor Cordier, from the Low Countries. Mrs Ady has given detailed descriptions of all the ceremonies and the dresses worn on this trip in her life of Beatrice d'Este, drawn largely from Beatrice's letters to her husband. Venice rose to the occasion. The distinguished guests were met at the Lido by a couple of rafts from which salutes were fired and trumpets blown, two galleys in full battle array and other craft decorated like gardens, while a cloud of gondolas escorted them to Venice over the lagoon, dancing in the spring sunlight. Isabella of Mantua showed her feelings when her husband wrote a glowing

description of the ceremonies—the soldier was greatly impressed with the roar of the salvoes with which the Duchesses were welcomed at Venice—by answering that all such things were very much the same and very boring and uninteresting.

The aged Doge, Agostino Barbarigo, came to escort his guests on the bucentaur and accompany them to the city. Among the allegorically decorated boats was one filled with Milanese warriors, with a Moor in the centre and decorated with the arms of the Dukes of Milan and Bari. Grouped round the Moor were the figures of Courage, Justice, Temperance and Wisdom. There was even a race between boats rowed by four women, a great novelty, which, out of compliment to Leonora, was won by one with a crew of a mother, her two daughters and her daughter-in-law. The Doge pointed out the most important palaces on the Grand Canal, gaily decorated with valuable Oriental rugs and carpets, and named many of the ladies loaded with jewels who thronged the windows and balconies. They stayed at the Duke of Ferrara's palace on the Grand Canal. This had been given to Niccolò d'Este out of gratitude for his having sent corn to Venice during the life and death struggle with Genoa in the War of Chioggia. Often taken back during subsequent wars, it had been restored to Ercole after the Peace of Bagnolo and had been lavishly done up for this august occasion.

This was on May 27th. Ludovico had meanwhile received news of the utmost importance. He had heard from Belgioioso that Charles, having made peace with Maximilian by the treaty of Senlis, was determined to embark on an expedition against Naples, which he gave out to be merely the preliminary for a great Crusade against the Turks. Ludovico was to be the director of the enterprise in Italy. Charles was sending Perron de Baschi on a special mission to the various Italian courts interested, and he was to promise

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French aid for the Pope against Naples in return for the investiture of the Kingdom of Naples. So grave did Belgioioso think the situation that he arrived himself on June 4th, having covered the six hundred miles between the French court and the neighbourhood of Parma in six days, almost without drawing rein. Obviously he wished to see Il Moro before the arrival of Perron de Baschi. The violence of the exertion made him seriously ill.

Ludovico now saw that he had no choice but to support Charles. He never really controlled the situation. As Alemanni wrote to Piero dei Medici (Vigevano, May 5th, 1494), it was Charles who took the initiative. All that Ludovico had done was to blow hot or cold according to his needs.

This news altered considerably the scope of Beatrice's mission to Venice. Ludovico had meant his wife, in spite of her youth, to be the real head of the embassy, though he had surrounded her with advisers of tried ability. As the instructions ran, "In sending the Duke of Milan his aunt, the Duke of Bari his wife, the dearest thing he has in the world, to congratulate you upon the conclusion of the League, Our Lords wish to show that the pleasure they feel is something quite out of the ordinary." Hence, when the Doge sent representatives to visit her on the day following, much to their surprise and delight, she asked to be received herself in audience by the Signory.

As they arrived in the morning, the commissioners stayed to Mass, which was privately celebrated, and were delighted at Cordier's singing. Beatrice, like her sister, had been thoroughly trained in music. She could sing and also play several instruments, especially the lute. Lorenzo Gusnasco of Pavia, a famous maker of musical instruments, who settled at Venice, made her a wonderful clavicord. Her sister, with her strong acquisitive instincts, left no stone unturned to get it into her hands after her death and duly succeeded.

At the audience on June 1st, after referring to the good relations that existed between the Lord of Milan and the King of France and the Emperor, she told the Signoria of Belgioioso's despatch and asked what, in their opinion, should be the nature of the answer of her husband to the King. She also laid stress on the completeness of the authority possessed by her husband at Milan. The Venetian replies were characteristically non-committal to both suggestions, for the Signoria readily understood that, by her reference to her husband's supreme authority, she was sounding them as to their willingness to support Ludovico in an attempt to seize the control of the Duchy. The gravity of the news from France would make it necessary for them to consult with the Pope. They were warm in their professions of friendship for the Duke of Bari.

The Duchess was, however, royally entertained. On May 30th, especially, there were some very splendid festivities. The day began with Mass at S. Mark's, in which Cordier and her choir played their part. The Duchesses and their party went thither on foot by the Merceria, having landed at the Rialto, and so enjoyed the shops that they were sorry when they reached the church. Here their own trumpets sounded a fanfare and the Doge met them. So great was the crowd that the old gentleman had to give up the idea of accompanying them into the Treasury, whither they made their way with the greatest difficulty. On coming out, they visited the Ascensiontide Fair on S. Mark's Square and were amazed at the wonderful show of glass. Everyone turned to look at the jewels Beatrice wore in her velvet cap. She was dressed in a bodice ornamented with the two towers of Genoa, a favourite device of Ludovico, and had a large diamond on her breast, and she tells her husband that people continually pointed to her, remarking what lovely jewels the wife of Signor Ludovico was wearing.

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Another Sforza device was the brush, also dear to Ludovico. There is the well-known fresco of him brushing the dirt from the figure of Italy. It was, however, a family device before his day. He was also fond of the bridle. The squatting greyhound with a hand upon its head was said to be a favourite with Francesco Sforza. The three blazing brands with the buckets, one of the most attractive, belonged to Galeazzo Maria. The three linked rings came to the Visconti from the Lords of Cremona and to Francesco Sforza when the town formed part of the dowry of Bianca Maria. The Dukes sometimes gave other families the right to use their devices. Thus the Borromei were granted the linked rings.¹

In the evening there was a ball, when it was so hot that Beatrice had to retire for a little. There was the usual classical-mythological display. At the banquet that followed the chief figures of the League appeared in sugar. It was followed by more mythology and allegory. The great joy of the boisterous young Duchess was the Bishop of Como, who was dropping with fatigue and boredom. When he asked how much longer it would last, she kept on telling him that there was any amount more to come and that it would go on till morning. His groans and wails, she says, gave her as much pleasure as the feast itself. She thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment which Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus, gave in her honour at her villa at Murano on the last day of her visit.

On her return from Venice the Ducal party went to Pavia for the summer. Hither in August came Ercole d'Este on a visit, bringing with him some of his actors, who played the *Captivi* and other comedies. As usual, Isabella d'Este had her correspondent to tell her all about everything. This time it is a nephew of Niccolò da Correggio. The evenings, she was informed, were spent at cards. Beatrice was very fond of a game

¹ Malaguzzi-Valeri, I, 321.

and we read of her winning goodly sums at them, as on her voyage down the Po to Venice. The Duchess of Milan took no part in any of these amusements, except the comedies. The Duke of Bari is fonder than ever of his wife, kissing and caressing her perpetually. Everyone was looking forward to the hunting—the Duchess of Milan used to annoy Ludovico by telling him how much better the boar-hunting was at Naples—when the news came of the death of Duchess Leonora of Ferrara in October.

Beatrice was plunged in the violent and demonstrative grief which was then considered natural when there was any real feeling. Isabella, now expecting her first child, showed more self-control and was soon writing to a friend at Milan for information about the mourning worn by her sister. Her correspondent could only tell her what she had heard, as Beatrice did not leave her rooms.

But there was the wedding of Bianca Maria Sforza in November and Beatrice, now at Vigevano, also roused herself for the occasion. She wrote to ask Isabella whether she had ever used that device of links suggested by Messer Niccolò da Correggio when they were together, “because I should like to have it made of solid gold to put on a *camora* (cloak) of brown velvet” for the marriage, when she would have to be out of mourning, though, owing to the death of her mother, she had little inclination for such novelties. Isabella reassured her and she was free to use it for the great ceremony on S. Andrew’s Day (November 30th), of which she wrote her sister a long and most detailed description. Mrs Ady gives it in full.

Did Leonardo paint a portrait of Beatrice? It has been suggested that she refused to allow him to do so, because he had painted Ludovico’s mistress, Cecilia Bergamini. The usual doubts have been thrown upon the well-known—one might almost call it famous—picture in the Ambrosian by experts, who have denied

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that it is a portrait of Beatrice, or that Leonardo painted it. At first it was said to be a portrait of the Empress Bianca Maria, but three pictures of her have since been unearthed, to which it bears not the slightest resemblance, so the experts have dubbed it Bianca Sanseverino, a safe choice, since there is small likelihood of another likeness of her being forthcoming. But surely anyone who takes the trouble to compare the features with those in Zenale's altar-piece or even with the bust by Cristoforo Romano in the Louvre cannot fail to be struck by the resemblance. No photograph manages to give the life that pulsates in the Ambrosian picture, obviously the work of a great artist, one would imagine a greater than Ambrogio de Predis or Zenale. In it, too, we see the device of the links referred to above worked on the mantle and one knows how jealously a great lady of that day clung to such distinctive and original devices and how rarely she allowed anyone else to wear them, even in her own family. Another characteristic is the little lock of hair at the side of the face which appears both in the Leonardo and the Romano bust, a variation in the Milanese coiffure of the day, which I do not remember to have seen in any other portrait. The rubies, too, are unique, whether pale (*balassi*) or deep red. The Empress Bianca Maria, also a Sforza, was the only other lady who could rival them. The magnificence of the jewels of the Sforzas, whether men or women, was notorious.

Outside the Cathedral a portico was built with a purple canopy embroidered with doves. Under a triumphal arch in front of the High Altar was a statue of Francesco Sforza on horseback wearing his ducal robes. The arch was square and was decorated with the arms of the Emperor and those of the Duke of Bari. In front of the altar was a great tribunal with seats for the chief guests. The street was beautifully decorated with box and ivy and laurel and green

myrtle and the houses that were not painted outside were hung with tapestries and other drapery.

Bianca Maria went on the car which Duchess Leonora had given Beatrice, drawn by four white horses. She was dressed in scarlet satin, embroidered with gold, with a long train and great sleeves like wings. Her jewels were magnificent. A prominent noble held each sleeve, while another carried her train. All the court officials walked in front of her. On the right of the bride sat the Duchess of Milan, the Duchess of Bari on the left. Beatrice had the links worked very deep in gold and green and white enamel on the front, the back and the sleeves of her *camora*; it was lined with cloth of gold, the belt was of large pearls fastened with a great ruby. After them came the ambassadors, those from France going first, and twelve carriages with a number of girls from the great Houses of Milan including the ladies of the two Duchesses.

The lively verses of Messer Taccone, a popular poet, give a vivid picture of the ceremony.¹ The cathedral was draped in gorgeous hangings, the best from Flanders and Turkey, and ablaze with lights and silver. Everywhere were the arms of the Sforzas and the Visconti, while the marble was draped in greenery. The seneschals met the distinguished guests and by signs and little tapers guided them to their places in the tribunal, before which the Archbishop, Guido Arcimboldi, who, like all his family, was a loyal adherent of the Sforzas, is to crown the bride, more white and spotless than a dove—"più che colomba immacolata e bianca." Cristoforo da Calabria with his white wand keeps back the crowd of the vulgar; any who are rash enough to try to break through come in for a good box on the ear. When all the wedding party was seated the Archbishop entered and Mass was celebrated with the sweetest music and singing. After the Mass the Queen of the Romans rose from her place

¹ Calvi, *B. M. Sforza*, etc.

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and, escorted by the two Dukes and their Duchesses, went up to the altar : the Bishop of Brixen gave her the ring and then crowned her, assisted by the Archbishop, to the sound of trumpets, the clanging of bells and the firing of guns.

The return was made on horseback, the Queen riding between the ambassadors of the Emperor and the Bishop of Brixen under a canopy carried by the Doctors of Law. The worst-dressed in the procession wore crimson velvet and the costumes were rivalled by the gold chains of the gentlemen. Both ways the road from the Castello to the cathedral was lined by the clergy of Milan in their robes. The cheering crowds bowed down before the bride.

*In castel giunse con grande gentilezza
ove la madre piagne d'alegrezza,*

for Bona was awaiting her return, weeping with joy. There followed dancing and jousting and prizes of fine brocade to each proud cavalier.

*La notte tante fiamme e tanti lumi
si come in foco Melan se consumi.*

At night there were so many lights that Milan looked as if it were being destroyed by fire. In the castle was displayed the trousseau, which formed part of the dowry, given by her uncle. The first item is the most precious :—

First, a collar made with the device of the evergreens with six large pale rubies (*balassi*), set in twenty-four diamonds of different kinds, six emeralds, fourteen large pearls and thirty-six small : this was valued at 9,000 gold ducats. Her jewels alone were worth 70,000 gold ducats.

The silver services for table and chapel were such as could then be made only in Italy and doubtless the chests were worthy of them. Among the items were an Office of Our Lady, a Missal and a Breviary, the silver on which weighed 344½ ounces, being valued at a

gold ducat an ounce. The clothes take up, naturally, most of the inventory, which fills sixteen printed pages.

The bride was escorted to Como by Ludovico and Beatrice, her mother and her brother Ermes and the whole court. Here she took a tearful farewell of her family, and, at the exact moment ordained by Ambrogio da Rosate, embarked upon a barge which had been beautifully decorated for her by the people of Torno, draped with hangings and greenery and rowed by twenty-four oarsmen. The night was spent at the castle of Marchesino Stanga at Bellagio. Next day they were caught in an appalling storm, which has been described by Bandello (Novel 31). The lords and cavaliers were "*di malissima voglia*" from fear of death, while the Queen and the other ladies wept and prayed to God for mercy and the sailors lost their heads and called upon the saints. The only one to keep cool was the great jurist, Giasone del Maino, who laughed at them all. Ambrogio de Predis was also one of the party, as he was to paint a portrait of Maximilian.

The bridegroom long delayed his coming to Innsbruck. He soon tired of his bride, who was as frivolous and as much a nonentity as her brother, Gian Galeazzo. When he found that there was no hope of an heir, he left her largely to her own devices in the castle of Innsbruck, where she led a very lonely life.

There was no state in Italy at this time that would not at need have called in the French, while very few princes would have been above coming to an understanding with the Turk. Venice, the strongest and most self-centred state in the peninsula, and Pope Innocent VIII had, as has been seen, already appealed in vain to Louis XI. But, powerless though he would have been to check the coming invasion, Ludovico has been justly execrated for its consequences since, whether responsible for it or not, he endeavoured from the first to turn it to his own advantage. The

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chronicler, Prato, heard a blind monk who was preaching before him on the Piazza del Castello lean from the pulpit and say to him : " Signore, do not show him the way. You will repent it." Instead of following the example of his predecessors in Milan and regarding the French alliance as a means of strengthening the Alpine barrier, he deliberately chose to use it for the elimination of the mountain frontier. " The said Signor Ludovico was a man very wise, but very timorous and most subtle when afraid," says Commynes. " I am speaking of one whom I knew and with whom I have negotiated many things, and a man without faith when he saw that it was to his profit to break his word." He was by nature a coward, ready to take any course to escape from the danger that was threatening, trusting to his skill in the utterly shameless and faithless craft which passed muster for diplomacy in fifteenth century Italy and upon which he prided himself to get him out of any difficulties into which he might be betrayed.

The one ruler who, however unscrupulous, was fully alive to the folly of calling in the French to redress the balance of power was old Ferrante of Naples, who had himself successfully recovered his kingdom from the last efforts of the Angevins to assert their claims. Ludovico characteristically tried to deceive him by declaring that he would never consent to a French invasion and, if he could be sure of not being left alone, would oppose it. Meanwhile the King of Naples had succeeded in coming to an understanding with the Pope. The Borgia was a Spaniard, and strongly Spanish in sympathy until he fell under the influence of his son Cesare. When it came to the point, he would never have given Charles VIII the investiture of the Kingdom of Naples, which his predecessors had bestowed upon Ferrante. The new alliance was cemented, to the delight of the Pope, by the marriage of his son Gioffrè to Donna

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Sancia d'Aragona, a natural daughter of Alfonso of Calabria, and thus a half-sister of the Duchess of Milan. Gioffrè was made Prince of Squillace. Charles VIII was very annoyed, exclaiming indignantly that his rights to Naples were as good as his claim to France.

Ferrante even talked of going himself to Genoa and having an interview with Ludovico in the hope of inducing him to renounce the French alliance and unite with himself and the Pope, in which case we may be quite sure that Venice, considering only her own interests, would have joined Charles. But in January, 1494, that fatal year for Italy, Ferrante died suddenly after a few days' illness. The last of the old rulers, with the blackest record of any of them, his ability and experience and far-sighted statesmanship had given him a great prestige. With him vanished all hope of peace. Ludovico found himself face to face with Alfonso of Calabria, his bitter enemy, and, with his character, it was a foregone conclusion that he would throw himself into the arms of France. The army of the new King of Naples had already begun to advance into Romagna and against Milan before his father's death.

Ferrante's death was, in any case, a great piece of luck for Charles VIII. It would be much easier for him to assert his claim against Alfonso than against a long-established and much respected ruler like Ferrante. Moreover, Alfonso of Calabria was bitterly hated by the barons in Naples, who believed that he had instigated his father in the worst of his atrocities against them. The Pope did not hesitate to give his support to Alfonso, expressing his surprise in a bull that Charles should turn his arms against a Christian kingdom instead of against the infidel.

Ludovico now threw off any hesitation that he may have felt. An interesting letter to his brother Ascanio, quoted by Delaborde¹ of March 18th, 1494, brings out

¹ *L'Expéd. de Charles VIII*, p. 338.

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clearly the views of Il Moro at this time : he always wrote to his brother as frankly as he spoke. He tells him, quite truly, that he has no desire to see Alfonso crushed, only to be kept too busy to meddle in other people's affairs. In order to effect this the French must be let into Italy, but in order that they may not accomplish more than he wishes or ruin Naples, he is arranging for Maximilian to cross the Alps at the same time : this counterweight will prevent them from becoming too strong. Maximilian was allied to him by marriage and would be no more anxious to see the power of France unduly increased than himself. The letter is very true to type and in every way characteristic of the writer's policy. Il Moro really believed that he had only to pull the strings and everyone would dance exactly as he pleased. It is true that he had not yet had any experience of that singularly illusive, if charming personality, the King of the Romans, whose promises were worth about as much as his own. The shiftiness of Ludovico's policy towards the various Italian Powers, which often varied from day to day, made a Florentine ambassador write, in despair, that he was a very Proteus. In this again there is no more typical son of his century. He is the very embodiment of the weaknesses of which Machiavelli despaired and which were so patent in his own Florence during the early years of the next century. All these wonderfully contrived and carefully arranged schemes gave way like so many spiders' webs at a touch of real strength, whether of arms or of character. His practical, hard-hitting niece, Caterina Sforza, once wrote to him that you cannot defend a state with words.

Hitherto Ludovico had refused to send his commander-in-chief, Galeazzo Sanseverino, to France, though Charles had continually urged him to do so. He now told Belgioioso that he had refrained from consenting as, by so doing, it might look as if he were

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being despatched to urge Charles to embark upon the Italian expedition. Any such suspicion must be avoided. His Majesty must have all the credit of acting upon his own initiative. He was now thoroughly alarmed at the prospect of the threatened Neapolitan invasion. His ambassador increased his fears by telling him that there were rumours of large sums being given to certain sturdy ruffians and warning him to have a sharp look out kept upon all strangers trying to enter the Duchy. Galeazzo Sanseverino was sent post haste to France to urge the King to start as soon as possible. Ambrogio da Rosate had told him that April 15th would be a lucky day for him to enter Lyons, where was the King, so, though the 16th was the date fixed for his official entry, he made an incognito appearance on the 15th, in order to be on the safe side. The official reception of the hero was such as had hitherto been reserved for royal dukes. Galeazzo and all his suite were dressed in the French style, which he always affected. The King himself conducted him to the Queen. He brought Charles handsome gifts of arms and horses, as well as some of the perfumes for which he had a passion. Galeazzo won all hearts and the King, who was a good joustier, could talk of nothing but his prowess in the lists. He hardly let him out of his sight and even introduced him to one of his mistresses, leaving them together while he spent the evening with another. Galeazzo's father-in-law was delighted at his receiving such unheard-of favours and being invited to share the most private amusements of His Majesty. Knowing his weakness, Galeazzo was careful to sing the praises of the women of Italy to his host.

There was, however, a strong party at the French Court opposed to the expedition, which caused Ludovico no little anxiety ; so powerful was it that Belgioioso told him that, without the presence of

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Messer Galeazzo, the expedition might have been abandoned. The war party was greatly strengthened by the arrival of the determined, violent-tempered Cardinal of S. Pietro in Vincula, Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II. He was the implacable enemy of the Borgia Pope and the dearest wish of his life was to see him deposed by a Council. This was his object in throwing his powerful influence into the scale in favour of the expedition. Hence Guicciardini gibbets him as the real cause of the misfortunes of Italy. The war party ended by carrying the day.

CHAPTER XII

THE INVASION OF ITALY BY CHARLES VIII OF FRANCE LUDOVICO BECOMES DUKE OF MILAN

FATE ordained that Louis, Duc d'Orléans, who claimed Milan through his grandmother, Valentina Visconti, should be the first of the French princes to meet the Duke of Bari in Italy. Their dislike and distrust of each other were mutual, for Ludovico was well aware that d'Orléans claimed Milan as his own. Louis reached his town of Asti in July and was given a great welcome by his subjects. Ludovico met him at Alessandria, but those who saw the meeting could not detect the slightest sign of their real feelings towards each other. Ludovico was as surprised as he was annoyed at being asked for a loan of 60,000 ducats, but was compelled to find the money, which he did with the greatest difficulty. However, it was this timely arrival of d'Orléans that saved Genoa from the Neapolitans and recovered Rapallo, where the brutal French methods of warfare struck terror into an Italy accustomed to the professional condottieri, who never killed, if they could help it, and valued their prisoners for the ransoms they would fetch. And it was the French under Stuart d'Aubigny and La Trémouille who forced the Neapolitans advancing in the Romagna to retreat.

Charles reached Asti in September, accompanied by the sinister Cardinal S. Pietro in Vincula. He had been obliged to raise money on the jewels of his allies, the Duke of Savoy and the Marchesa of Montferrat. He was welcomed by the Duke of Bari and Duke Ercole of Ferrara. Beatrice was at the neighbouring

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castle of Annona with her choir of singers and a court of eighty of the loveliest ladies of Milan, for the King's weakness for the fair sex was well known. The gallant Charles kissed each of them in turn, hat in hand, beginning with Beatrice and her favourite Bianca Sanseverino. The King was not an attractive figure with his hanging, slavering mouth, his clumsy nose, his small, stooping body, and his thin, rickety legs; the size and dignified glance of his eyes are said to have been his one redeeming feature; more like a monster than a man, says Guicciardini, entirely lacking in culture, hardly able to read and write. Commynes says he was kindly. Italians of the Renaissance, who had learnt to value a fine presence and personality, were very disappointed. However, he was a king and the ladies made the most of his good points. Beatrice said that no prince could have been more gracious. He begged to be allowed to see her dance, so first her ladies danced and then Beatrice herself, to his great delight. One thinks of the lines of Beatrice's friend, Gaspare Visconti :

Io vidi belle, adorne e gentil donne
Al suon di soavissimi concerti
Coi lor amanti muover lenti, lenti,
I piedi snelli.

Some of the more obliging ladies received handsome presents of jewels from Charles. The richness and variety of Beatrice's dresses amazed the French as much as it had done her mother.

Then the King fell ill of a malady which Rosate, perhaps tactfully, diagnosed as smallpox, so ill that Louis d'Orléans, encouraged by Ludovico's many enemies, began to think of turning his arms against Milan. The French troops, who felt the heat and found the wine sour and had, as always, made themselves bitterly hated, would have been glad of an excuse to give up the expedition altogether and return to France. However, the King recovered in a month.

Meanwhile another tragedy was preparing. The young Duke of Milan, first cousin to the King of France, was lying dangerously ill at Pavia. He and the Duchess had rarely been seen at Milan, especially since the marriage of his uncle. Donna Isabella liked Pavia as much as she hated Vigevano. Here Gian Galeazzo spent most of his life in his favourite amusements, hunting and hawking and riding out in the park, often with his wife on a pillion. We read of Bianca Sanseverino coming on a visit and the two young women pelting each other and rolling each other over in the hay. In the evening, towards sunset, Gian Galeazzo carried Isabella off for a long ride in the park. On wet days they would watch a game of *pallone* in the hall. He was happy leading this quiet life. In company he was a complete nonentity.

He was now continually unwell and absolutely refused to obey the orders of the doctors. All the details, which Signor Magenta has collected, are preserved in their letters to Ludovico. They complain that neither his uncle's letters, nor their remonstrances had the slightest effect. He hid plums and other fruit under his pillow on the excuse that he liked to smell them, and then, serious though the state of his digestion was, ate them raw. He also drank far too much wine. He gradually grew too weak to stand and the news became serious. Ludovico sent another doctor, for the presence of the King of France made it impossible for him to go himself. Donna Isabella nursed her husband. His mother, Bona, was sent for and when she saw him, so distressed was she at his condition that she had to turn her head away and weep. When a slight improvement occurred, Ludovico, at his special request, sent him two new horses; as he was not satisfied with them, Ludovico sent two others.

Meanwhile the King of France came to Pavia, to the great annoyance of Ludovico, who had done his best to keep him away. Relations had become so strained

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between them that at Vigevano the King had insisted on all the keys of the castle being brought him and had posted his own guards at all the gates. In spite of the Duke of Milan's illness, he was received in magnificent state. Here he saw Bona and also insisted on seeing his cousin, but their conversation was confined to generalities, as the King did not wish to offend Ludovico. The dying Duke is said to have begged him not to forget his son and his wife.

The position of the unhappy young Duchess was pitiable in the extreme. There is not a very probable story to the effect that, when Ludovico insisted on her seeing the King of France, who was going to drive her father and her brother from their kingdom, she said that she would rather plunge a knife into her heart. But the chroniclers relate that she flung herself at the King's feet and, weeping bitterly, implored him to have mercy on her father and her brother. Charles was visibly moved, but said that it was now too late.

Gian Galeazzo could no longer be under any illusion as to the seriousness of his condition. One of his last acts was to have the horses that had been sent him by his uncle and also some of his favourite greyhounds brought up to his room for him to see. It is clear that he himself, in his simplicity, had no doubt of his uncle's affection to the end. He even asked whether he would miss him. Finally, he made a vow to dower a hundred poor girls, if he recovered.

The details of his illness and the general state of his health, as well as his way of life, make it quite possible that Gian Galeazzo died a natural death. Yet at the time the belief was almost universal that he had been poisoned by his uncle. Even Corio says that there were suspicions and, according to Guicciardini, one of Charles' physicians said that he noticed signs of poison—a rather unconvincing charge, considering the state of medical knowledge in the Quattrocento. Cruelty of any kind was entirely alien to Ludovico's nature.

The number of executions at Milan in his day was remarkably small; they increased rapidly under the French. But the death of his nephew was so opportune that, if he was not responsible for it, it is impossible to blame people for thinking that he was. In any case he was largely responsible for the state of health that caused it, if the death was due to natural causes. Bona and the Empress Bianca Maria believed him to be guilty. So did Isabella d'Aragona, though she could not say so at the time. After Ludovico's fall she told the Ferrarese ambassador (September 11th, 1499) that Ambrogio da Rosate had confessed to her that he had given Gian Galeazzo poison in a glass of syrup with the knowledge and by the orders of his uncle. The astrologer, whose house had been sacked by the mob, fled from Milan, but was caught and brought back. She had intended to charge him and have him tried for the murder, but preferred to await the coming of Louis XII. By then, however, she had left for the South.¹

Charles, meanwhile, had gone on to Piacenza, where the news of the death of his cousin really moved him. Ludovico had hastened back to Pavia, only to hear that his nephew was already dead. He therefore went on to Milan, where the body of Gian Galeazzo, robed in all the ducal insignia, was laid in state before the High Altar in the Cathedral. Two epigrams accusing his uncle of poisoning him were pinned upon it.

Now was the moment when Il Moro must act. Maximilian was Emperor, his father having died, and Ludovico had already received the promised deed granting him the Dukedom of Milan. The deed declared that the dukedom had been conferred upon Ludovico as the first son to be born to Francesco and Bianca Maria after his accession to the Dukedom. This was a mere quibble, seeing that Francesco's title had never been recognized by the Emperor, a

¹ Péliissier, *Louis XII*, Vol. 2, p. 206.

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fact which, however, fully entitled Maximilian to confer it upon anyone he chose. Ludovico at once summoned the leading officials and councillors to the castle—men who were all his friends—and proposed that Gian Galeazzo's son, Francesco, known as the Duchetto, should be made Duke. It is not surprising that Andrea Landriano got up and said that these were no times for the rule of children and it was but right that the Duke of Bari, who had so long been Duke of Milan in all but name, should become so in fact. Other men of weight supported the motion and he was duly proclaimed Duke. Donning a coat of cloth of gold he rode about the city for some time amid loud cries of *Moro! Moro!* which some said were largely those of his supporters, preceded by the sword and sceptre. He visited S. Ambrogio, the bells of which were duly rung for the occasion. Immediately after the funeral of his nephew Ludovico rejoined the King of France, who was making for Florence.

The Duchess Isabella remained at Pavia, plunged in profound grief. Not till December did she go to Milan. Beatrice rode out two miles to meet her, getting out of her own carriage and returning in that of her cousin, both of them weeping copiously. Ludovico met Isabella at the gate of the castle and welcomed her with profound respect. She was given her old apartments. Seeing her distress on entering them, Ludovico addressed a few kind words to her. Barone, the jester, who described the scene in a letter to Isabella d'Este, says that the sight of the Duchess with her three young children, worn out with weeping, in a dress like that of a friar, made of the roughest serge, would have melted a stone. He himself could not restrain his tears. Isabella remained where she was in the castle till after the death of Beatrice, whereupon Ludovico sent her to live in the *Corte Vecchia*. When the Emperor Maximilian protested against this expulsion he said that he could no longer endure the

sound of her over his head, so much did it recall memories of his own wife. For a time Ludovico insisted on her son living with his own children in the Rocchetta and seeing his mother only once a week. This greatly increased her distress.

The advance of the French by Florence and Rome, followed by the easy conquest of Naples, does not come within the scope of this book. The flight and death of her father, followed by the defeat of her brother, Ferrantino, were further blows to the unhappy Isabella d'Aragona.

No one was more perturbed than the new Duke of Milan at the easy victory of the French and the complete collapse of the Kingdom of Naples. Such an increase of French power was the last thing he desired. He began to dread that Louis d'Orléans would soon have full leisure to assert his claims to the Dukedom with the additional strength of Naples behind him; Isabella d'Este was then in Milan, where the consternation was general. She wrote that it seemed as if carnival would never end that year; Ludovico would not let her leave except "in punto d'astrologia" and meant to keep her there till the bitter end.

Relations between Ludovico and the King of France grew daily more strained. Charles by the express permission of Ferrantino, who had been obliged to fly from Naples, had now been joined by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. This boded no good to Milan. Nor were other Powers more pleased at the French success, least of all the Emperor Maximilian, who was indignant at Charles usurping his place and acting as arbiter of Italy. Ferdinand of Spain was also alarmed at seeing the French firmly established in Naples, which was uncomfortably close to Sicily. Ludovico therefore decided to throw over the dangerous ally whom he had expected to be able to dominate and join the league formed by these two princes and the Pope and Venice.

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It was at Venice that the negotiations were brought to a successful conclusion. To Commynes, who was French ambassador, we are indebted for a description of the efforts of Venice to keep him in the dark. The story is typical of Venetian diplomacy. Commynes was dumbfounded when he was summoned to the presence of the Doge and told the truth, and the Venetians were surprised at his inability to conceal his feelings, as any of the grave and reverend Signors in front of him would always have been able to do. That evening he watched the ambassadors of the allies pass in triumphal procession down the Grand Canal and observed that one of those from Milan, who had made a point of being particularly friendly to him, avoided recognizing him.

Ludovico immediately sent Galeazzo Sanseverino to attack Asti, while Maximilian bade Louis d'Orléans renounce his claims to Milan or else forfeit his rights to that town. On May 26th, 1495, Ludovico was solemnly invested with the ducal insignia by the ambassadors of the Emperor with all the usual ceremony before the cathedral. He had hitherto refrained from using the title. The Marquis of Mantua was there, but not his wife, to the disappointment of Beatrice, who sent her sister a glowing description of the scene.

The Duc d'Orléans quickly took the opportunity of delivering an effective counter-stroke with characteristic French vigour, by making a surprise attack upon Novara, the gates of which were opened to him. Ludovico's methods of acquiring the land he wanted for his improvements at Vigevano and the development of La Sforzesca had been distinctly high-handed and had not tended to make him popular in the district. Some prominent people of Novara, whose rights had been affected, felt strongly on the matter. The French even penetrated as far as Vigevano. Ludovico, who was not in good health,

was panic stricken. He talked of flying to Spain and shut himself up in the Rocchetta of Milan. The chronicler, Prato, puts the point clearly. Ludovico, he says, was considered cowardly because, "as he placed too much reliance on his schemes and his skill in meeting all contingencies by his ability and his experience alone, without appealing to arms, he became so timid, that he seemed to be frightened not only in the actual presence of armed force, but at the very mention of deeds of cruelty." His wife, however, who suffered from no such weaknesses, put the castle in a state of defence and prepared to resist. Help came from Venice, as a member of the League, and the danger was quickly averted. A serious shortage of money was already beginning to make itself felt in Milan, owing not a little to the extravagance of the court and the heavy cost of Ludovico's many undertakings. The pay of the troops was generally in arrear, a fact which impaired the efficiency of the army, and there were frequent desertions.

The allies determined to cut off the retreat of the French, and, if possible, capture Charles himself, who was placed in considerable danger owing to his desertion by Milan. Gonzaga of Mantua, who commanded the Venetian contingent, which was far the strongest and best equipped, was made General-in-Chief. They took up their station at Fornovo, at the end of the narrowest portion of the valley of the Taro, in the Parma district. They did not attempt to prevent Charles from seizing Pontremoli, which gave him command of the pass. Those who want a detailed account of the campaign should turn to Corio or, better still, to M. Delaborde. Hostilities began with the Stradiots attacking the French advance guard and, in accordance with their custom, bringing back the heads of those they had killed on their lances. For these they were paid a ducat apiece. The custom had its disadvantages. The heads of stray peasants were

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often pressed into service when the bag was small. The French were under 10,000 in number, badly fed and parched with thirst in the hot July weather, but they possessed the fine fighting qualities which had already given them a marked superiority over the Italians, sadly corrupted as soldiers by the mercenary system, qualities that were soon to be tested to the full in the great days of Bayard against the Spaniards. Also they were held together by a single purpose. They knew that their one chance of escape depended on their victory. Charles himself appeared at his best on the morning of July 6th. Commynes was astonished at his vigorous, spirited appearance, so unlike himself, with his firm belief in the victory promised him by Savonarola.

The Italians numbered some 30,000, but they suffered all the disadvantages of an army of such a kind, fired by no national spirit, undermined by jealousies and suspicions. Charles had made several attempts to get into touch with the enemy and negotiate an undisputed passage, but in vain. There was a heavy shower, the thunder echoing among the hills more noisily than the artillery, as the French crossed to the other side of the Taro in their attempt to force their way out of the valley into the more open country. The stream rose rapidly and when Gonzaga prepared to cross it, he was obliged to do so much further up than he had intended. Thus the main attack, which he was to lead, was delivered towards the rear of the French, instead of in the centre. He showed himself, as Corio puts it, a better soldier than general in the battle, fighting with the greatest personal bravery : his horse was killed under him and he was consequently obliged to retire for a time. The Venetians, hoping to increase the keenness of their men, had told them that there would be all the plunder of the Kingdom of Naples waiting for them to loot. But the Stradiots, excellent fighters as a rule, who had

been placed on the tops of the hills—Corio describes them as hovering like eagles over their prey—and bidden to charge the enemy when they began to waver, were afraid that the light horse might reach the baggage first and get the cream of the plunder. The result was that they charged down at once and fell to plundering, without giving the battle a thought.

The attempt of Count Caiazzo to head off the French by attacking their vanguard, which seems to have been a very half-hearted effort, failed hopelessly. His men fled at the first discharge of the French artillery, though it did hardly any harm. It was afterwards said that Caiazzo was acting in accordance with the orders of Il Moro, who had no more desire to see the power of Venice—always a dangerous neighbour—increased by a complete victory than to cut off all hope of an understanding with Charles by being responsible for his defeat and possible ruin. Though such a policy was as like Ludovico as it would have been like his grandfather, Filippo Maria Visconti, and would have called forth only admiration among the Italian diplomatists of that day, there is no evidence that he adopted it.

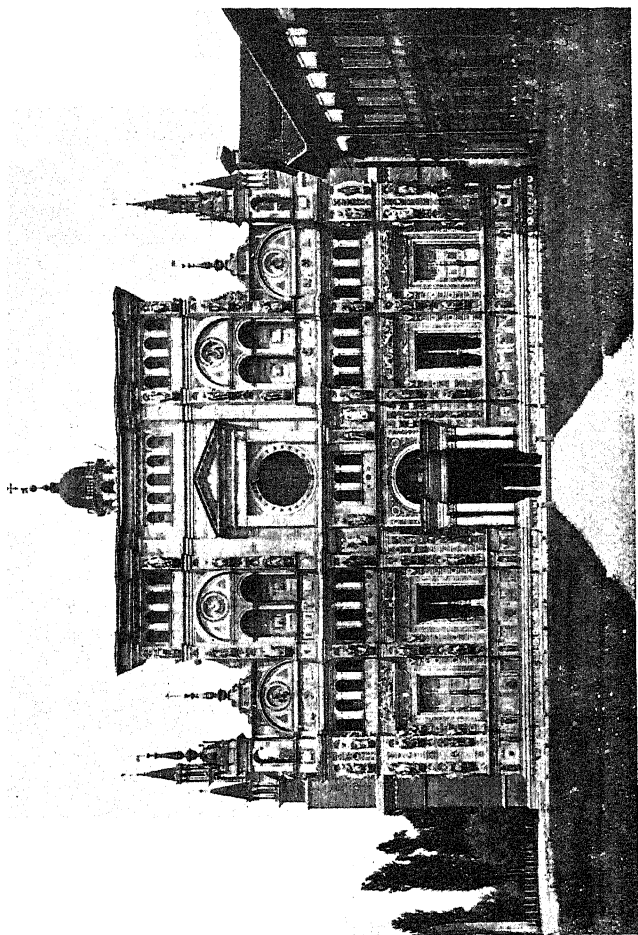
The consequence was that the main body of the Italians was driven back over the Taro in disorder and a number killed. Count Pitigliano, who was a prisoner with the French, managed to escape during the engagement with another Orsini and said that, if only they would attack again, the French would be utterly beaten. But no second attempt was made. The baggage and all the rich booty fell into the hands of the Italians, but the French remained in possession of the field and were able to retreat in safety. "If only others had fought as well as we did", wrote Gonzaga, "the victory would have been complete." For the allies claimed the victory, since they had taken the King's tent. Some of Caiazzo's fugitives had nearly captured the King himself, who was for a

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moment left alone. On the whole this would have been a doubtful gain. It would have led to endless jealousies and done the Italians little, if any good, in the long run.

Gonzaga sent the hangings from the royal tent and the book of portraits of the ladies whom Charles had most admired in Naples back to his wife at Mantua. Later, however, he asked her to return the hangings, as he wanted to give them to the Duchess of Milan. Isabella was characteristically annoyed at being asked to part with them, making no attempt to conceal her feelings. Once she had got anything she valued into her hands she could rarely be induced to relinquish it, as her dear friend Elisabetta of Urbino was to learn, when she and her husband asked her to return the statues that Cesare Borgia, at her special request, had given her from the loot of their palace. However, possibly at the suggestion of Ludovico, Beatrice sent back the hangings, saying that she had enjoyed seeing them, but she felt that she had no right to keep them.

The League was now able to press the siege of Novara much more closely. The Duke and Duchess of Milan had asked to see the army and a great review was held for their benefit on August 5th. Corio says there were 45,000 men present. It was remarked that the Duke's horse fell no less than four times—a very bad omen. The besieged were enduring every privation and were in desperate straits. Commynes was with the King and, as usual at this time, much to the fore in the negotiations for peace, into which Charles VIII entered readily. They were held at the lodgings of the Duke of Milan. He came daily to meet the commissioners to the end of the gallery with Beatrice and the meeting took place at the bottom of his room. There were two rows of chairs, nearly touching and facing each other, for the ambassadors, the Duchess being seated between the Duke and the ambassador of Ferrara. The Duke alone spoke for



[Alinari Photo]

THE FAÇADE, CERTOSA OF PAVIA

the Italians and one only on the French side. "But, as it is not our custom to make set speeches as they do, sometimes we spoke two or three together, and the Duke said, 'Ho, one at a time!'"

The starving garrison was allowed to evacuate Novara. But the arrival of some 10,000 Swiss to reinforce the French put an entirely different face upon matters. Ludovico became seriously alarmed, and with good reason. Fortunately for him Charles had had enough of war, as Louis d'Orléans and Trivulzio did their best to induce him to march upon Milan. Once again he left his allies in the lurch and made separate terms with the French at Vercelli. He recovered all he had lost and Charles promised not to uphold the claims of Orléans to Milan. Ludovico was to send a couple of ships to join the French fleet against Naples and to support Charles there, should he require help, and to recognize the French as his overlords in Genoa. The Duke of Milan had no intention of carrying out any of these promises, as Commynes, who was left behind to see that he did so, very soon learnt.

After the Peace of Vercelli Ludovico wrote with his usual plausibility to Francesco Foscari in Venice: "I admit that I have done Italy a great wrong, but I did it in order to keep myself in my present position. I acted unwillingly, but King Ferrante was to blame, and also, if I may be permitted to say so, Your Most Illustrious Signory, because you did not understand. But since then have you not seen that all my energies have been ceaselessly directed towards the delivering of Italy? And you may be sure that, if the Peace of Novara (i.e. Vercelli) had been delayed longer it would have been all up with Italy." He had every reason for blaming Venice for the utter selfishness of her policy, but it must not be forgotten that he was later to call in the Turk against her—as other rulers would have been quite ready to do—and, according

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to Paolo Giovio, who heard it from the faithful Francesco da Pontremoli, Ludovico used to say during his imprisonment, that the Turk was the only one who had kept faith with him. Ludovico, where his own interests were concerned, would unhesitatingly break any oath or commit almost any crime, though he preferred, when possible, to walk in the paths of righteousness, but he was always astonished at anyone breaking faith with himself.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEATH OF BEATRICE D'ESTE

THE Duke of Milan was now at the height of his power, though even he must have realized how shallow were the foundations upon which it rested. He gave his support to the Pisans, who had been made independent by Charles VIII, in their struggle for freedom against Florence. He proposed to call in the Emperor Maximilian to help him and also to act as a check upon the French at Asti. Marchesino Stanga was his envoy and in the summer of 1496 he went with Beatrice, who hardly ever left him, to Maltz in the Valtelline. With them was the Venetian ambassador. Maximilian, probably of set purpose, gave the meeting as informal a character as possible. He made his appearance with a hunting party, exerted all his charm, treating his Milanese guests with the utmost cordiality during the few days they spent together.

It was in the same spirit that he returned their visit. He came rather as Ludovico's intimate friend than as Emperor. He did not go to Milan, but spent a happy three weeks at Vigevano, where he thoroughly enjoyed the informal life with the splendid hunting parties and admired all that his host was doing in his castle. Now it was that Maximilian asked that Ludovico's eldest son should be named after himself. At Pisa the Emperor proved singularly ineffective, being without troops and without money. Venice made it clear that she had no intention of helping to pull Ludovico's chestnuts out of the fire for him, and it was not long before he was taking an active part with Florence against Pisa.

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Sanudo says that the reason Maximilian showed such friendship towards Ludovico was, firstly, because Milan was the strongest state in Italy; secondly, because he hoped that he would be able to get money out of him. Nor is there any doubt that the Emperor's visit added greatly to his host's prestige. It was about this time that, according to Malipiero, Ludovico boasted that the Pope was his chaplain, the Emperor his condottiere, Venice his chamberlain and the King of France his courier, going and coming at his pleasure. Guicciardini assures us that he was so puffed up by his success that he called himself the son of Fortune. Believing that the future would be like the past and that the cleverness of everyone else would prove inferior to his own, "he promised himself that he would always be able to direct the policy of Italy according to his wishes and, thanks to his untiring efforts, twist everyone else round his finger. So far from attempting to keep silence about this foolish idea, he liked everyone to believe it and repeat it. The result was that all Milan was lauding in Latin or Italian verses and in flattering orations the marvellous wisdom of Ludovico Sforza, upon which hung peace and war in Italy." Even his friend, Isabella d'Este, had felt the change. As early as 1494 she wrote to her husband that she hopes he will see that presents of trout are sent from time to time to Milan, not every week, as if they were Il Moro's vassals.

It was in 1496 that Bianca, the wife of Galeazzo Sanseverino, died at Vigevano, where her husband had a palace given him by Il Moro. Ludovico had allowed the marriage to be consummated in the previous year, when she was only fourteen and very delicate, and it is not surprising that she fell ill at once and never recovered. Beatrice, who was very fond of Bianca and made her her inseparable companion, got the Archbishop of Milan, an old friend of Ludovico, to break the news to him. He was passionately



[Alinari Photo]

BEATRICE D'ESTE

Detail from the altar-piece attributed to Zenale

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attached to his children and she knew how he would feel the blow. Galeazzo Sanseverino shut himself up in his rooms in the Castello, making himself ill from want of exercise and vowing that, when his father-in-law sent for him, he would go to him "con la lingua per terra", i.e. licking the floor, a penance still imposed in the remoter parts of Italy.¹

Beatrice, who was once again about to become a mother, was far from well herself, nor was she particularly happy. Though her husband was with her more and more—chroniclers tell us that he hardly ever left her side—she had a rival among her own ladies, the beautiful Lucrezia Crivelli, the wife of Giovanni di Monasterolo. Isabella, with her thirst for gossip, was told in a letter from one of the Stanga in 1495 that Ludovico was sweeter upon the Crivelli (più cotto) than ever, though he behaved with the utmost circumspection. The scandal soon became public property, nor did it tend to increase Ludovico's popularity. In May, 1497, the Crivelli bore him a child and he had others by her. Her portrait was painted by Leonardo, but it has not been identified, though it is often thought to be La Bella Ferronière in the Louvre.

When the ducal party returned to Milan for the winter Beatrice was continually at S. Maria delle Grazie, praying by the tomb of Bianca Sanseverino. On her last visit there on January 2nd, 1497, her ladies could hardly get her away, so depressed was she. Possibly she had a premonition of her fate. That evening there was much gaiety at the castle, with dancing in her rooms. She was taken ill later and died half an hour after midnight after giving birth to a still-born boy.

Antonio Costabili, the Ferrarese envoy to Milan, enables us to see how deep and genuine was Il Moro's grief. Costabili was almost as intimate as Trotti

¹ Giuliani, *B. Sanseverino*, in *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1912.

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had been and it was to him that Il Moro gave the palace he had built for himself as a possible place of refuge in Ferrara. His letter is dated January 3rd, 1497. He was sent for by two Councillors, who escorted him to the Tower Chamber, where were all the ambassadors, councillors and a number of gentlemen. "His Excellency admitted me at once into the little room, where he was in bed, quite prostrate with a grief as deep as a man ever beheld; and when I had paid him the usual signs of respect, since some of his councillors had begged me to comfort His Highness and urge him to patience, I decided to say a few words to him, just as they occurred to me, imploring him to endure this cruel blow with fortitude and constancy, as by so doing he would give comfort and courage to Your Excellency to do the same and pleasure and hope to his servants. His Highness replied by thanking me for reminding him. And though I might be able to do so, he well said, he did not think that he could endure a blow so cruel. He said that the reason why he had sent for me was to tell me that, if His Excellency had not treated your daughter as well as she deserved and also, that, if he had wronged her in any way, as he knew he had done, he asked pardon of Your Excellency and of her, being distressed to the depth of his soul. He added that in all his prayers he had always prayed God that He would let her survive him, as one in whom he had garnered up all his comfort. And since this had not been the will of God, he prayed Him and would never cease to pray Him that, if it were possible and if ever the living might see the dead, He would grant him grace to see her and speak to her once, as one whom he loved more than himself. . . . And when he bade me farewell, he told me to go and accompany the body, grieving with words that would have melted stones."

Costabili also describes the funeral. The whole city was plunged in sorrow. The ambassadors

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carried the body to the gate of the Castle, where the Councillors took it. At the corner of each street on the way to S. Maria delle Grazie were magistrates who acted as escorts in turn. "All the relatives wore mourning cloaks reaching to the ground, their heads being covered. . . . She was borne to S. Maria delle Grazie accompanied by a host of friars and nuns and crosses of gold, silver and wood, and gentlemen and citizens and common people, all making the most piteous moan ever heard for the great loss there has been to this city. The number of white wax tapers was stupendous. At the door of S. Maria delle Grazie the ambassadors were awaiting the body, and, having received it from the hands of magistrates, they carried it to the High Altar, where was the Reverend Cardinal Legate, seated between two bishops, and he read the Office himself."

Costabili goes on to describe the universal grief in Milan. No one showed, he says, more sincere feeling than Galeazzo Sanseverino, who gave extraordinary proof of his devotion to the Duchess and did everything in his power to make known the virtue and goodness that were in that lady.

The mourning was proportionate. The Duke had his rooms in his castle draped in black, notably the Saletta Negra, in which Leonardo da Vinci worked. He dressed, in accordance with the fashion, in a long mourning cloak of the roughest stuff. Henceforth his favourite seal was one engraved with the head of Beatrice. Always of a religious turn of mind he became distinctly more devout. According to Sanudo he said the Office, fasted and lived a chaste life for a time. He went to S. Maria delle Grazie daily at first and became more and more intimate with the Prior and the monks. Later he used to go there every Tuesday and Saturday and dine with the Prior.

And it is in S. Maria delle Grazie that we still feel nearest to Ludovico and Beatrice amid the change and

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noise of the bustling Milan of to-day. It is true that the tomb with their likenesses sculptured by Cristoforo Solari, known as *Il Gobbo* (the Hunchback), where the resemblance of Beatrice to Ferrantino of Naples comes out so strikingly, has been removed to the Certosa at Pavia. But on a morning of brilliant sunshine, or on a wet evening, when the streets are filled with the workers hurrying home, or waiting for the trams, one has but to slip into the dimly lit church to come under the sobering influence of Bramante's great dome, while beyond, on the wall of the Refectory, is the miserable ruin of Leonardo's masterpiece. *Le Grazie* is Ludovico's church and his gifts to it, which included some valuable plate, were rich and varied. He had more than one reason for his interest. He had a genuine respect for the Dominicans who owned it and the Prior was a personal friend of his. Then Gaspare da Vimercate, who had done more than any other man to win his father the Dukedom, had a special fondness for the church and had given liberally towards it. On his death-bed he bequeathed his interest in it to Ludovico, begging him to support it. Ludovico loyally accepted the trust: in fact, he largely rebuilt the church. The first stone of the choir was laid in 1492, and between then and 1497, says Malaguzzi-Valeri, thanks to Ludovico and Bramante, the church was brought to its present state. The choir and the noble dome were built, the cloisters remodelled, the sacristy filled with storied cupboards and Leonardo was called in to paint the Last Supper and to begin decorations on the other wall of the Refectory, where are still to be seen the remains of his portraits of Ludovico and Beatrice. And now there was to be the tomb for the Duke and the Duchess.

Above all *S. Maria delle Grazie*, or rather the dome, is Bramante's best work in Milan, giving him his rank as the worthy successor of Brunelleschi, though it was in Rome that he was to achieve his greatest triumphs.

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And it is to Leonardo and Bramante of Urbino that Ludovico owes his chief glory as a patron of art. Bramante appears to have come to Milan about 1480-2. At first he worked chiefly as a painter. The speaking, vivid frescoes in the Brera were taken from the Palazzo Panigarola. The remains of the Thousand-Eyed Argus, which he painted over the door of Ludovico's treasure-room in the Castle of Milan, are still visible. He was paid sixty ducats, a good salary for the times, though it was often in arrears. But he was better treated than most of his kind, for he was the type of artist to appeal to a discerning patron who wanted to get things done: sensible, definite, practical and punctual. He was just the man for Ludovico, who was in any case more interested in building and engineering and therefore set a high value upon an architect of genius who did what he was asked and could be counted upon to finish his job within a reasonable time. He always upheld him, as in his differences with the canons of S. Ambrogio, insisting that he should have a free hand in designing their monastery and cloisters. The other church for which Bramante was responsible is S. Maria di S. Satiro, where the Baptistry is his work.

The Certosa of Pavia went steadily on; indeed it was the special pride of Ludovico, who delighted to show it to his guests. The choir-stalls and the rich, brilliant façade are the chief additions that were made in his day. For the façade Giovanni Antonio Amadeo was chiefly responsible. In 1497 the church was consecrated by the Papal Legate amid great rejoicings. Amadeo was also the chief architect for the cupola and spire of the cathedral of Milan, which were completed about this time. This, like the Certosa, had its own independent funds, established by Giangaleazzo Visconti. Such was Francesco Sforza's interest in the cathedral that he assigned to it ten per cent of the building fund of his own Castello. The ceremony of the annual

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offering of the funds for the cathedral was one of great splendour. Each quarter of the city brought its quota in a procession of triumphal cars, with mythological or Biblical subjects or scenes from the siege of Troy.

This is how Malaguzzi-Valeri sums up the Lombard art of the day : " The artists who flocked to the capital and looked up, as best they could, to the twin stars from the other states [i.e. Leonardo and Bramante] deserve the attention of the fair-minded student for their charm and grace, for certain personal qualities ; the *festosità decorativa*, so completely Lombard, with which the palaces and churches, ornamented in terracotta by followers of Bramante, redden so beautifully in the sun ; and the frank merriness of the *putti* and the serene Madonnas of Beltraffio and Solari and the gay, well-finished works of the school of portrait-painters who look up, not unworthily, to the art of Leonardo, far beyond their reach though it be, still please and interest a circle wider than that of the art-critics."¹

¹ *La Corte*, etc., Vol. IV, p. 264.

CHAPTER XIV

LOUIS XII CAPTURES MILAN

THE sudden death of Charles VIII of France in April, 1498, was a severe blow to Ludovico. He had become completely reconciled to the King, who was cured of all desire for further adventures in Italy. His successor, the Duc d'Orléans, Louis XII, had always regarded himself as the rightful Duke of Milan through Valentina Visconti and Ludovico knew that he would lose no time in asserting his claim. The personal enmity that had sprung up between them at their first meeting precluded any hope of an understanding.

With the death of Beatrice fortune seemed to desert Il Moro. His diplomatic activities were ceaseless, but they brought him little profit. Venice, always the rival of Milan, could be counted on to support France so long as it was to her advantage to do so and not a moment longer. Duke Ercole of Ferrara, in spite of his close relationship with Ludovico, was, from force of circumstances, the most whole-hearted ally of France in the peninsula. The alliance was his one safeguard against aggression by Venice or the Pope. He remained neutral in the struggle, for at heart he would have preferred the Sforza in Milan. Louis' desire to divorce his wife and marry Anne of Brittany and the Pope's desire to bring the Romagna to heel by carving out a state there for his son, Cesare Borgia, now released from the cardinalate, resulted in the Pope throwing all his weight into the French scale. He had long ago forgotten his debt to Ascanio, which, it must be admitted, had been generously paid on his election. The personal friendship that sprung up between Louis and Cesare, when the latter went to

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France with the necessary bull and came back with a wife, helped to cement the bond. Naples alone, whose danger was second only to that of Milan, could be counted on as an ally and Naples could give him little more than moral support. The lesser states were all hostile or indifferent, except Caterina Sforza at Imola and Forlì and the Bentivoglio at Bologna, who were threatened by Cesare Borgia.

The ally upon whose support Ludovico set most store was the Emperor. Maximilian's eternal want of pence, to say nothing of such influence as his wife, Bianca Maria, possessed—for she remained a warm friend of her family, always eager for news of Milan in her dreary, lonely life at Innsbruck—gave a solid foundation to the alliance, which Maximilian really did value; and it is impossible not to be amazed at the skill with which he emptied Il Moro's pockets and used his influence. Ludovico supported him in his war with the Swiss, thereby giving rise to some feeling against himself in the cantons, which were allies of France, while the money that he poured into the coffers of the Emperor was one of the most obvious causes of the difficulties that beset him when called upon to face the French.

For, more than anything else, it was lack of money to hire and pay troops that lay at the root of his failure. His assumption of the Ducal title to the exclusion of the handsome little Duchetto, whose father he was believed to have murdered, had alienated public opinion. The death of Beatrice, who was greatly beloved, was another blow to his cause. Worst of all, his lavish expenditure and the increase of taxation, which was often arbitrary and oppressive, did him no little harm.

It was now that Ludovico committed the unpardonable offence of turning to the infidel, the Sultan Bajazet, and urging him to come to his relief by attacking Venice. He even thought of sending an

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embassy to him, though he solemnly informed the ambassador of the Emperor in public that he would contribute 50,000 ducats a year, if he went on his projected crusade. The Sultan did as he was requested, for he was always glad of a chance to do his hereditary enemies all the harm he could, and he naturally found them more easy to tackle when they had a war on the mainland on their hands. Paolo Giovio, though a Bishop, shows no horror at Ludovico's action, saying that he was driven almost of necessity to turn to the Turk.

From the outset Ludovico's prospects were not brilliant. He seems to have had no idea that Louis would start at once. As Pélissier shows in his admirable book, the Duke's preparations were slow and not very effective ; even had he realized the true state of affairs, shortage of funds would have made it impossible for him to do all that was necessary. Then the very qualities that made Milan, in spite of many shortcomings, perhaps the most brilliant court of the Renaissance, were a distinct disadvantage in the coming struggle. Ludovico was a man of peace. He had nothing of the soldier in him, nor had he an eye for a man ; indeed, he would have been afraid of placing power in the hands of a man of real force of character. Gonzaga of Mantua, generally considered the best soldier of his day in Italy, was not at his ease amid the frivolities of the court of Milan. He avenged himself by abusing Ludovico's horses, saying that nothing would induce him to own such screws. Nor was it for his qualities as a general that Ludovico had put the *beau sabreur* and sportsman, Galeazzo Sanseverino, in command of his army ; and unfortunately for Milan, Sanseverino's overbearing manner had offended more than one of the best friends of the Sforzas. Chief of these was Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. Trivulzio had not his rival's charm, but he was a good soldier, who remained loyal to the master he served.

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The French resented being under an Italian and he was cordially hated by many of his colleagues, such as Stuart d'Aubigny and Ligny, but Louis XII realized his value for the campaign against Milan, where he had many friends and relatives, and supported him in these differences, though he afterwards discarded him when he proved wholly unsuitable as governor of the conquered Duchy.

Gonzaga of Mantua began by accepting a post as condottiere under Ludovico. Isabella was pleased and her friendship for Il Moro comes out in the trouble she took to prepare for his proposed visit to Mantua, even to enquiring of her ambassador in Milan what was his favourite wine. But the visit never took place, as the Marquis quarrelled with Ludovico about the title he was to receive. Apparently he was to have commanded against the Venetians: it would have been difficult to have him serving on the same front as Sanseverino. Isabella did her best to induce her husband to keep faith with Milan, for, apart from her attachment to her brother-in-law, a French victory would be no advantage to Mantua. Gonzaga disliked Ludovico as his wife's friend. Costabili even taxed the Duke of Milan on one occasion "because he had said more than once that the Marquis disliked him out of jealousy for his wife".¹ Gonzaga ended by remaining neutral.

Ludovico could not even count on the support of all the Sanseverino. He gave offence to Count Caiazzo, the head of the clan, who was probably a sounder soldier than his brother, of whom he appears to have been jealous. Caiazzo revenged himself by doing the cause of the Sforzas considerable damage before actually deserting to the French. Galeazzo showed his incompetence from the first in his perfunctory and superficial inspection of the preparations for the defence.

¹ *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1906, p. 100.

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Ascanio, who had fled from Rome, was to be his brother's mainstay. His meeting with Ludovico, which was delayed a day because the stars were unfavourable, was most affectionate. The cardinal was left in charge of Milan, while the Duke went into retreat at Le Grazie for a week, probably more from a desire to get Divine aid for his cause and to find out the future than from any real disinterested religious feeling. Ascanio threw himself into the work with an energy and a capacity that impressed all observers. He also gave lavishly of his wealth. With him were the Sanseverino cardinal and Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, Archbishop of Milan, whose personal friendship for Il Moro outweighed the warnings of his father, who was displeased at his throwing in his lot with the enemies of his ally, the King of France.

Ludovico's position was hopeless from the first. The Italians of the Renaissance were, as a whole, incapable of standing up to the French of those heroic days. Disaffection was rife. Ludovico even demanded hostages from a number of towns on the borders. His need of money was desperate and his methods of getting it no less so. He increased taxes out of all proportion, seized half the ecclesiastical revenues and imposed forced loans, especially on suspects, who were alarmingly numerous. As time went on the exactions became intolerable. Knowing that Cremona would be one of the first towns to fall to Venice, he ordered the inhabitants on August 1st to pay 50,000 ducats within a week and sequestered all the ecclesiastical revenues of the district. The people of Milan as a whole were surprisingly loyal, helping in every way they could and undertaking to pay a fixed number of men. They had had a taste of French methods and had no wish to repeat the experience. Ludovico tried to bluff Costabili, possibly also himself, with stories of the numbers of troops on whom he could count, but the difficulty of finding money to

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pay those he already had was sapping their loyalty. Meanwhile he was leaving no stone unturned to get into negotiations with Louis with a view to an understanding, but the King of France refused to entertain the idea for a moment. He referred to his enemy not as Duke of Milan, but as Signor Ludovico.

By the middle of August, 1499, the French were beginning to advance from Asti. The calculated frightfulness of their methods—the garrison of Annona, when the citadel had been battered into surrender, was ruthlessly massacred—struck such terror into Western Lombardy that the strong towns made no more serious resistance. By August 25th the French were before Alessandria. Here Galeazzo Sanseverino was to make his stand with the main army of Milan and endeavour to hold up the advance. Neither troops nor citizens had any confidence in their commander, who spent his time in amusements and in philandering, while he never pretended to have the slightest faith in his men. He wrote that they were a poor lot, already afraid of the enemy. Perhaps this was the greatest proof of incompetence that he gave. The Stradiots caused the French considerable trouble and there seemed every prospect of the place putting up a stout resistance when, on the 28th, Galeazzo Sanseverino with Ermete Sforza and all the staff made their way out of the fortress and fled towards Milan, followed by the rest of the troops in the utmost confusion. The French occupied the town and took a number of prisoners, many of them men of rank. The whole of the main army of Milan had virtually melted away.

It was generally believed that Galeazzo was in communication with the French and had betrayed his trust or had been seized with panic; but Pélissier, following Corio, thinks that he acted on orders from Ludovico, who bade him retire on Pavia, where the second stand was to have been made. His reception

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by the Duke and his subsequent conduct made this view very probable. No good commander of that day would have risked his entire army by shutting it up in a single fortress, if there were the slightest chance of success in the open. The performance was pitiable in the extreme. When Galeazzo appeared before Pavia with a considerable force, the town refused to open its gates, saying that the citizens could defend themselves. His old enemy Trivulzio, who was leading the victorious French, sent a trumpeter after him with a message to the effect that, when a captain has lost one place, it is his duty to defend another.

As early as the 17th Venice had been informed, we learn from Sanudo, that the Duke was very depressed and that Ascanio was trying to comfort him. Without his brother he would have been ill and almost ruined. All hope of effective resistance was now at an end. The Florentine ambassador wrote that the whole country had gone French ; nor can one blame it, after such a wretched display. Ludovico showed that he knew that he had been caught napping by calling Costabili to witness that he had taken every possible precaution, but luck was against him. One feels that Galeazzo Sanseverino was the general he deserved. He was particularly bitter at the way in which he had been left in the lurch, complaining that he had spent his reign in succouring others, and there was some truth in this remark : he could not say enough against Naples. A Venetian chronicler records that he was in despair, giving way like a woman. Yet he would solemnly declare a hundred times a day that he meant to die Duke of Milan. At one moment he talked of ceding his Duchy to the Emperor, who would have found it a terrible white elephant, at another he was going to put himself at the head of his men and risk all.¹ The almost daily information we have about this

¹ For all this period, see Pélissier, *Louis XII.*

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period, thanks to Sanudo's diary and the letters from ambassadors, is extraordinarily interesting for the light it throws upon the character of Il Moro.

As has been said, he went into retreat in S. Maria delle Grazie from August 19th to 25th. Here he consulted nuns with a reputation for prophecy as well as the stars. They gave him little comfort. A nun declared that it was the will of God that he should no longer rule,¹ while an astrologer sent by Ascanio said that he would willingly be hanged if the Duke did not lose his Duchy. A regular council of astrologers was held and decided that, though August was against the Duke, September would prove favourable to his cause. Other professors of the art insisted that his ill-luck would last longer. The effect of all this upon one of Ludovico's temperament can be imagined.

He almost quarrelled with Ascanio because he insisted upon lightening the taxes. But he solemnly handed over to him his tottering state and the guardianship of his children. It was said in Milan that his only chance lay in an understanding with Venice, which was overrunning the Eastern portions of his Duchy. Yet, according to Costabili, such was the hatred of the French in Milan that Ludovico could still raise from 350,000 to 400,000 ducats for the defence. But on August 30th Antonio Landriano, the Duke's secretary, was attacked in the streets and wounded so severely that he died next day. The confusion now became greater than ever.

Ludovico saw that his only chance was to abandon Milan and try to gather an army sufficient to enable him to expel the French. The castle was well supplied with all necessaries and put into a condition for standing a long siege. His plan was to wait at Como, if Maximilian would supply him with the necessary men at once; if not, to push on into Germany and there collect an army. He guessed that the

¹ Sanudo, II, 1187.

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Milanese would soon tire of the French. The Castle was left in the command of Bernardino da Corte, who owed everything to Ludovico and of whose loyalty he felt so sure that he did not even ask him for hostages. Ascanio and others are said to have questioned the wisdom of entrusting all his prospects to the honesty of a single man. Ludovico had refused to give Ascanio the command, apparently because he did not quite trust him.

Before starting Il Moro transferred the Duchy of Bari to Isabella d'Aragona, who refused to let him take her son with him. He also made restitution to a number of prominent citizens whom he had deprived of their property. Ascanio went first with the two boys. Ludovico took with him his treasure, which he had reserved for such an emergency. This Corio estimated at 240,000 ducats, packed in special sacks, so that the coins would not chink, and a number of pearls. Some trusty men-at-arms had their breastplates filled with ducats. Il Moro visited S. Maria delle Grazie, whither he was accompanied by a number of councillors and nobles, of whom he took a touching leave; then he started towards Como, but as soon as they had left him, he turned back to visit his wife's grave once more. He then went to the Castle, where he spent the night. He left next day with Galeazzo Sanseverino, Cardinals Sanseverino and d'Este and other intimates.

On September 2nd Trivulzio dined privately in Milan with a cousin. The city was getting out of hand and the mob was already pillaging the houses of the Duke's friends, notably the lordly stables of Sanseverino. The French army was encamped in the Park of Pavia. Jean d'Autun, who was with them, cannot say enough in praise of it. So many deer were there in great herds and troops that one saw them wandering about the park in all directions. "So rich was it in woods of fine forest trees, in flowering fields, in verdant meadows, in running brooks, in

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clear fountains, gardens and pleasure houses . . . that it seemed more like an Eden or Paradise than an earthly domain." The French troops took good toll of the deer and did much mischief.

Milan capitulated, the army encamped in the gardens of the castle and Trivulzio took every precaution to protect his native city, refusing to allow the Gascons to enter it. The Venetians had also advanced and attained their objective by capturing Cremona. The rest of the Duchy was to go to France.

Ludovico had left orders that Bernardino da Corte was to hold out till October, by which time he would bring reinforcements from Germany. Trivulzio was most anxious to get the castle into his hands by peaceful means, as it would have been very difficult to take by force. In this object he was warmly supported by the members of the provisional government, who were not chosen from among the friends of the Sforzas. It was not long before negotiations were set on foot and Trivulzio could walk triumphantly along the moat exclaiming as he looked at Francesco's great fortress, the admiration of the whole of Italy, "*Sic vos, non vobis*",¹ for he knew that his crowning triumph was in sight. Handsome bribes and pensions were to be conferred on Bernardino da Corte and the chief officers, while Corte was to have all that remained of the Sforza treasure after the troops had been paid. One Italian officer and his men, like the Swiss mercenaries, refused to have anything to do with the betrayal, declining all terms. By September 17th the French were in possession; the loyal troops were allowed to withdraw.

Bernardino da Corte was execrated by the whole of Milan and treated with contempt by the French. He seems to have been absolutely callous, without any sense of shame or decency. Two days after the surrender Trivulzio sent on to him a letter from

¹ A companion completed the quotation: "*Nidificatis aves*". "Thus do ye birds build nests not for yourselves."

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Ludovico, beginning "Caro Fratello", and asking him to hold out for another month. Louis XII, on seeing the strength of the castle, was astonished at his treachery. Corte spent the rest of his days at Asti. The French treated him as he deserved. Trivulzio borrowed 7,000 ducats from him, which Louis, with characteristic irony, made him supply, the money for paying the troops of the garrison. By November the whole of the Milanese was in French hands.

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN, CAPTURE AND DEATH OF LUDOVICO SFORZA

LUDOVICO only just escaped from some French light horse that had been sent in pursuit of him to Como. All the way to Germany he was forced to pay heavily. The people of the Valtelline refused to let him pass for less than 34,000 ducats ; the lords of Beccaria fixed the blood-money for a relative of theirs whom he had executed at 60,000 ducats. The French made determined efforts to cut him off in the Valtelline, for Trivulzio calculated that his treasure would pay the army for three years. But they returned with nothing more than the rich spoils of an abbey and some other property of Cardinal Ascanio, a number of nobles who had not managed to escape in time and Lucrezia Crivelli with her son. Lucrezia was escorted back to Milan, where she was entertained with all honour by the Bishop of Como. After the fall of Ludovico she took refuge at Mantua, where her second son by the Duke of Milan was born. Isabella welcomed her with open arms, as she did the Countess Bergamini. She also managed to induce the authorities to restore to the Crivelli most of the wealth she had received from Il Moro. She lived on at Mantua for some years with her two sons.

There were many rumours about Galeazzo Sanseverino who, as a matter of fact, was with his master. Some said that he had been put to death. Everyone, according to Sanudo, spoke worse of him than of a prostitute.

Ludovico was much disappointed at being welcomed only by a small escort instead of the army of which he had dreamed. But he soon recovered his spirits, being much comforted by the sympathy and lavish

promises of the Emperor, in which he still seems to have placed implicit faith. He remained in the Tyrol, in the neighbourhood of Bolsano and Merano. With him were some 350 persons, including his two sons, with their tutors and their governess, Camilla Sforza, widow of Costanzo, lord of Pesaro, who was soon clamouring to be allowed to go back to Italy. Such a large party was anything but welcome in these Tyrolese towns during the winter. The treachery of Bernardino da Corte was a terrible blow. We are told that, on hearing the news, he exclaimed that there had been no such traitor since Judas Iscariot, and he did not speak another word that day. He was also troubled by the climate. His gout bothered him and he had severe chills with spitting of blood. Ambrogio da Rosate could find no comfort for him in the stars and he missed his children, to whom he was devoted; he was separated from them, as the whole family was considered too large to remain together. Still more did he miss the company of Lucrezia Crivelli; and, after the luxury to which he was accustomed in Milan, he found his present existence in such a climate very irksome. He was not of the stuff that is steeled by misfortune. His suite rapidly diminished when they realized that there was small chance of a speedy return, and they found that the French put no obstacle in the way of their going home. Many of them were hurt at Ludovico's open distrust of Italians and his preference for Germans about his person; nor did they look forward to the cold of the winter. Also there were frequent quarrels among them and much jealousy, especially of the favour enjoyed by Sanseverino after his exhibition of incompetence, if not of cowardice.

As for the Tyrolese, all they wanted was Ludovico's money; they said quite openly that they wished Maximilian would make away with the Duke and seize his treasure. Doubts were even expressed at the Emperor's court as to his rights to the Duchy. Bianca

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Maria maintained that his treasure was really hers, as it had belonged to her father and her brother, while her brother Ermes thought that, when reconquered, the Duchy of Milan should not be given back to Ludovico. Whatever his own views, the Emperor would have found it impossible to lead an army against the French in Italy, owing to the opposition of the Diet, but he treated the exiled Duke with all courtesy, welcoming him splendidly when at last they met and giving some royal entertainments in his honour. His present circumstances made these doubly welcome to Ludovico.

As long as the castle held out Ludovico did all he could to raise an army, but after Bernardino da Corte's betrayal he realized that he would have to wait. On the whole this was all for the best: it gave time for the reaction which French rule always produced in Italy. Even during the short visit of the king the troops behaved disgracefully towards the inhabitants. Ascanio was still his brother's ablest and most energetic helper. The cardinal did his best to conciliate the Borgia Pope by giving him back Nepi, a castle for which he had an affection. He would have gone to Rome himself, but the French knew better than to grant him a safe-conduct. He left no stone unturned to effect his brother's restoration, making full use of his influence and diplomatic skill. It was he who was largely responsible for the negotiations with the Emperor in January, 1500. But Ludovico's ample treasure was being steadily drained, by no one more than by his host, Maximilian, who was continually making new claims on the ground of past debts and other excuses.

Feeling in favour of the exiled Duke was rapidly increasing in Milan. Trivulzio's Guelf sympathies, which were pronounced and not very tactfully displayed, caused much discontent. The leaders of the movement for the restoration of Il Moro were mostly important ecclesiastics, who were in regular correspondence with him. They were busily preparing the

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way by steady and growing agitation, by distributing arms and proclamations and manifestos, said to have been the first for which the printing-press was used, and by appointing leaders to take command of the mob in the various districts of the city. Ludovico therefore set resolutely about raising troops. He wrote to Giovanni Sforza in Pesaro, telling him of his plans and encouraging him to hold out against Cesare Borgia, now Duc de Valence, or Valentino, as he was generally called in Italian. He talked of bringing an army of 15,000 men, of whom 12,000 would be Swiss. And, in spite of the emptiness of most of the Emperor's promises, the Swiss readily supported him. Galeazzo Visconti was soon successfully recruiting in the cantons. By the end of January Ludovico decided to act. In this he showed his wisdom, for the strong movement in his favour throughout the Duchy was worth infinitely more than a few thousand men-at-arms and time was everything. He started with a force estimated at at least 20,000 men, made up of various nationalities. The Burgundians and the Swiss formed the most valuable contingents.

The news of this advance, rumours of which had spread long before the Duke actually started, was the cause of genuine rejoicing almost everywhere. Such was the jealousy among the French leaders of Trivulzio's position that even they were glad of anything likely to shake his authority and weaken his influence with Louis. Trivulzio saw that matters were serious when Bellinzona expelled its garrison and the Ducal forces pressed on almost unopposed. He recalled Ligny, one of the bitterest of his enemies, from Como, which welcomed Galeazzo Sanseverino and Ascanio, who were in command of the advance guard. Yves d'Alègre, who had been sent to help Cesare Borgia in the Romagna, was also recalled and made his way virtually unopposed through the Duchy to join his compatriots. The withdrawal of his forces compelled

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Cesare to abandon for the time being his projected siege of Pesaro. He was thus obliged to bring his first campaign in the Romagna to an abrupt end after capturing Caterina Sforza and her towns of Imola and Forlì.

In spite of the rising tide of anti-French feeling in Milan, Trivulzio made every possible effort to hold it. Furious at the change of front among his countrymen, he not only put the castle into a state of defence, but placed garrisons in the Corte Vecchia and even in the cathedral. This only increased the feeling against the French. Trivulzio himself was looked upon as a traitor by the Milanese, as indeed he had always been regarded by Ludovico, who had had his effigy publicly painted up, in accordance with the custom of the time, hanging by one leg, as a traitor. He now endeavoured to address the Milanese in a set oration, but it was too late. They mocked at him, telling him that they were waiting to see his next turn. When he said that he was ready to die for his country, he was told to prove his words by dismissing his soldiers. He ended by losing his temper completely. He determined to call out his men and show the city no mercy, but the state of the streets convinced him that this was now impossible. D'Autun, in his vivid way, says that there were over 200,000 men under arms—obviously an absurd exaggeration—and that you could not see the ground for them. "It was amazing to see the excitement among the citizens, so impetuous that the like has not been since the days of Marius and Sulla in Rome." A collision was avoided, the French retired into the castle and Trivulzio was obliged to abandon Milan on February 3rd.

During the retreat the people broke down the bridges and put every obstacle in the way of the French, while a number of halberdiers hung on their rear, commanded by Galeazzo Sanseverino. D'Autun describes the plundering feats of his countrymen with

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great gusto. In one village which they set on fire the women and children remained in the burning houses rather than fall into the hands of the French till the troops set about saving them forcibly and placing them in safety. Ligny himself set the example. They retired upon Novara to await the reinforcements which Louis was sending at the earliest possible moment.

Ascanio was back in Milan on February 2nd, with young Erme Sforza and Galeazzo Visconti and 6,000 Swiss. He lodged in the Bishop's palace, as Trivulzio had sacked the Corte Vecchia. Bells were rung and the enthusiasm was boundless. Ascanio staged the return of his brother with the utmost care. His progress from Como had been one long triumph, the whole countryside turning out to greet him with cries of "Duca, Duca! Moro, Moro!" On his entry he wore a robe of crimson damask, a black velvet cap with an enamelled collar round his neck, from which hung a diamond, an emerald even larger and an enormous pearl. One remembers Trotti describing him, when fully arrayed to give audience to the diplomatic corps, as looking like an angel from Paradise. D'Autun goes one better on this occasion, saying that such was his reception in Milan that those who saw it might be pardoned for thinking that Almighty God had come down among them. The jewel was valued at 50,000 ducats. It is almost impossible for us to understand the importance attached to display of this kind in Renaissance Italy, when the money value of costumes was eagerly passed from mouth to mouth. The restored Duke was radiant with happiness and said to look younger than ever. Gracious, easy, stately and handsome, he was the perfect embodiment of a prince of the day, as he once again rode behind the sword of state into the city that bore traces of the debt it owed him on every side, with the old cry Moro! Moro! echoing above

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the peal of the bells and the blare of the trumpets. "If the walls, the trees, the very ground had possessed a voice, I believe they would have shouted, Moro," writes the Mantuan envoy.¹

This was probably the most triumphant day of Ludovico's life. Hitherto there had always been a strong latent opposition to his tenure of power. Nothing delighted him more than a picture of the Lion of S. Mark, displayed near the Porta Nuova, by which he entered, with a snake round its feet, a mounted S. Ambrose upon its back lashing it with a whip, an eagle eating its brain and a Turk pulling out its teeth. The picture fairly reflected popular opinion. One of the chief grievances of the Milanese against the French was that they had allowed Venice to lop off the whole of the Ghirad'adda and Cremona from the Duchy as their share of the spoil. The Duke was said to have been carried on to the cathedral by a crowd of 60,000 people. He entered it between Cardinals Ascanio and Sanseverino, who had also worked hard to bring about his restoration. Ascanio gave the blessing to his kneeling brother and the vast crowd, though he was dressed as a layman.

Shortage of money was again the difficulty. Ludovico's treasure had rapidly disappeared in Germany and his needs were desperate. Many of the nobles and most of the corporations made generous contributions, the gentlemen declaring that, if nothing came from outside, Milan would have the glory of restoring the Duke unassisted. By such means 40,000 ducats a month were assured, but this was only half the sum needed. The Duke's agents were said to be begging money from door to door, almost hat in hand, the citizens answering that they could not give. "They would subscribe 25,000 ducats and no more."² Ascanio gave generously, sacrificing all

¹ Péliissier, *Louis XII*, II, 130.

² Sanudo, III, 135.

his plate, while the Duke pawned his jewels. The village priests opened subscriptions and the treasures of the churches were melted down. But these exactions created much discontent, especially when it was rumoured, quite untruthfully, that the Duke had refused to touch his own treasure, which was intact in Germany.

The French held out in the castle, rather to the surprise of the Milanese, with the memory of Bernardino da Corte fresh in their minds. An effigy of that worthy was painted in the Piazza del Castello, hanging by the foot as a traitor, for those in the castle to see. The siege was pressed with vigour, but it neutralized a number of troops who might have been employed more usefully in the field. Thanks to information from a man who was allowed to bring in provisions, the besiegers were able to flood the supplies in the cellars and even to cut off the water from the mill; but the castle held out. Ascanio was in charge of the city and of the siege operations.

Ludovico had started with the intention of besieging Novara on February 5th, on the advice of his new astrologer, for Ambrogio da Rosate was in disgrace, even his estates having been transferred to his successor. On his way he recovered Vigevano and its strong castle, which was held by the French. This success did not a little to hearten Ludovico's men, but it brought the ill-feeling of the French officers against Trivulzio to a head and Yves d'Alègre was at no pains to conceal it. Trivulzio had lost nearly all his authority. Yet a surprise attack by the French upon the outskirts of the newly-captured Vigevano struck such terror into Ludovico that he was on the point of retiring upon Pavia. Fortunately, Galeazzo Sanseverino was there to reassure him.

The army of Milan next began to besiege Novara, but it was continually weakened by desertions, as

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the men's pay was in arrears. The Swiss asked Ludovico to let them sack the town by way of compensation and when he refused—such cruelty revolted his whole nature—since their pay was not forthcoming, 4,500 of them marched off home. Even the troops from Milan were becoming troublesome. However, the arrival of the long promised guns from Maximilian—one of the few really effective services he did Il Moro in return for all the money he had received—put a different face upon affairs. Il Moro was enabled to compel the town to surrender. Never did success come at a more opportune moment. Milan was too delighted to heed the ominous news of the surrender of Piacenza to Venice. The French, however, still held the castle and the discipline in the Ducal army could hardly have been worse. Everyone was master, says Sanudo: "There was no man capable of taking command." It was this that had made the Sforza cause helpless from the first.

Ludovico hastened back to the capital in another attempt to raise money. There he made one of his notable speeches to the crowd. Very impressive, according to Giovio, was the temperate gravity of his address, enhanced by his handsome and generous expression and appearance. He told his subjects that he liked being a captain and should enjoy it thoroughly if he were like Caesar, who was not forced to find money for his men, since it was sent him from Rome. Moreover, Caesar's men were well disciplined, nor was he in command of foreign mercenaries.¹

But he had thrown away his chance. While he was in Milan the long-awaited reinforcements arrived for Trivulzio. They were under the command of La Trémouille, who had taken as his ominous device a bloody sword, a torch and a whip. His force was of excellent mettle and he had with him some of the best artillery in France. While the state of the Milanese

¹ Giovio, *Elogi*; Luzio, *I. d'Este*, etc., *Arch. Stor. Lomb.*, 1901.

army went from bad to worse and a bitter feud sprang up between the Italians and the Swiss, La Trémouille put new life into the French. Both sides were anxious for a decision, for Ludovico saw his army dwindling daily. When the French advanced towards Novara their light cavalry were driven back by the Stradiots and the Italian light horse, led by Galeazzo Sanseverino. But the Swiss were deserting in masses. However, the battle was hotly contested and the French were compelled to retire from Novara, which they were proposing to besiege.

The conduct of the Swiss ruined the chances of the Italians. At this juncture four thousand of them wished to go over to the French, but their countrymen in the French ranks declined to fight beside them. The French insisted that, in return for safe-conducts, the Swiss and Burgundians, who were Il Moro's most efficient troops, should give up their master. This they refused to do, but they said the French might take him, if they recognized him among them. Ludovico's efforts to induce them to fight were futile. They broke into his quarters and told him that the French would make him a prisoner, news which he received with resignation. The French sent to suggest that it would be wiser for him to surrender voluntarily to Louis. But, while he was preparing to go to the French camp, the Swiss, who were afraid of losing their prize, seized him, promising to convey him safely to Bellinzona. On the next morning, April 10th, he was disguised as a Swiss, with his hair under a cap and a pike in his hand. When a number of them had marched past in regular formation and the Duke had not been found, La Trémouille would have used violence to force them to give him up, but their countrymen on the French side threatened to intervene to protect them. The rest of the Swiss were then made to pass in single file under a pike. At last the Duke was recognized by his pallor, his corpulence,

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his unmistakable air of distinction and his unsoldierly appearance. It is said that the Bailli de Dijon induced one of the Swiss to point him out for 200 ducats. Galeazzo Sanseverino was arrested at the same time.

The capture of Il Moro was of greater importance to Louis XII than a battle won. With the Duke in his hands the war was over for the time being. Ligny, to whom he surrendered—he flatly declined to see Trivulzio—paraded him round the ranks of all the Swiss. When he was brought before La Trémouille the Frenchman thanked him for saving them so much trouble by his prompt surrender. Ludovico then reminded his captor of his promise to see that he was well treated by Louis. La Trémouille, however, answered that he had invalidated his promise by his attempted flight, though it had been undertaken against his will. Ludovico was then imprisoned in the castle of Novara. The garrison of the castle of Milan easily raised the siege and occupied that city, where the people were soon shouting *Franza, Franza!* hardly less vigorously than they had shouted *Moro, Moro!* a few days earlier. It might be urged that they did so in self-defence and the military incompetence of Ludovico and his favourite Galeazzo Sanseverino went far to justify their sudden change of front.

On the 17th Ludovico started on his journey after being provided with a wardrobe suited to his rank—two doublets of cloth of gold, two of cloth of silver, two of silk, a cap of cloth of gold and the rest to match. With him went Galeazzo Sanseverino, who lost little time in making his peace with the French. He entered the service of Louis and was made Grand Ecuyer, a post for which he was eminently suited, by Francis I. At Asti, the town of the King of France, people shouted “*Mora Il Moro*” and other insults in the ex-Duke’s face, in spite of the protests of his escort. He flushed and even shed tears. At Susa, just before

crossing the Alps, he became seriously ill and spat blood. Trivulzio sent him a litter. He was met by the King's guard on entering French territory and made an impressive entry into Lyons, as Louis had intended, escorted by the Royal guard, dressed in black and mounted on a mule. Though he kept up appearances as he rode through the town, it was noticed that he was ill and continually trembled. He had to be carried from his mule into the castle. The King watched the entry, unseen, from the palace.

By May 15th the Duke of Milan was so ill that it was thought that he could not live. But once more he recovered. For the next four years he was imprisoned in the castle of Lys-Saint-Georges, in Berry. He was at first deprived of all his Italian servants, but this had such a bad effect upon him that he was allowed to retain his favourite valet, Pier Francesco da Pontremoli, and one or two others. Louis declared that his imprisonment should be in every way honourable, the food worthy of the King himself, "and it appears that he is by no means dissatisfied", wrote the Ferrarese ambassador in France, who, doubtless by his master's orders, was especially interested in him. He complained of the noisy insolence of his guards, the King's archers, who tried to comfort him by assuring him that he would recover his Duchy. Then he grew moody and depressed. He would eat nothing but fruit, and that in large quantities. When he became unwell, he was allowed more liberty and even to go hunting, accompanied by a number of guards. This privilege he owed to the intervention of the Emperor. Ludovico was continually writing to his captor with plans and promises and imploring him to grant him an interview, but Louis steadily refused to see him.

Ascanio was captured by the Venetians while trying to escape in the neighbourhood of Piacenza. They delivered him over to the French and he was

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imprisoned at Bourges. In 1503 he was released on the understanding that he would vote for Cardinal d'Amboise at the Papal election. He died two years later of the plague.

The Emperor made repeated efforts to secure Ludovico's release, but Louis would not hear of it. Four years later he was transferred to Loches, where he had more freedom. Early in 1508 he attempted to escape by bribing one of his guards. He was smuggled out of the castle in a cart of straw, but he lost his way and was easily recaptured; indeed, the chances of his succeeding in getting out of France from the Loire district were negligible. After this his liberty was considerably curtailed. His name and other inscriptions can still be seen cut in the walls of his dungeon at Loches, where he died in May of the same year. There were the usual rumours that he had been poisoned. The place of his burial is not certainly known. Pier Francesco da Pontremoli told Paolo Giovio that Ludovico, with his gentle, religious nature, had borne the miseries of his lot with resignation, saying that God had visited him with this affliction for his early sins, since inscrutable fate alone could have brought plans which lacked nothing that human wisdom could give them to failure. There we have the unmistakable voice of Ludovico, spinning his eternal webs; or perhaps we should say the voice of the Italy of the Renaissance. One hears Caterina Sforza commenting, "You can't defend a kingdom with words." Similarly he is said to have written to Ascanio, asking him, since he was so much more clever than he, to tell him how he could obtain his release.

When Louis XII came to take possession of his newly recovered Duchy, Isabella d'Áragona hastened to Pavia to pay her respects to him before he made his state entry into Milan, with her son, the Duchetto. This handsome, clever boy was very popular in Milan,

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so popular that, to Ludovico's great annoyance, he was saluted with cries of *Duca, Duca!* when he rode about the streets. He was therefore forbidden to do so, though, during his last days there, Ludovico had himself ridden about with him. No one knew better than Louis that the Duchetto was his most dangerous rival. He insisted on separating him from his mother and keeping him virtually as his prisoner. He took him to France, where he was made to enter the priesthood, the surest way of preventing him from having legitimate heirs who might prove troublesome. He was richly beneficed and became Abbot of Noirmoutiers. He died in 1512, at the age of twenty-two, from the effects of a fall from his horse while hunting.

Everyone was profoundly sorry for Isabella d'Aragona, who rapidly acquired the reputation of being one of the unhappiest women of her day. When, in 1501, she went South to Naples with the intention of living there as Duchess of Bari, she was obliged to witness the final overthrow of the Aragonese dynasty, thanks to the iniquitous pact which Ferdinand of Spain, who was ostensibly supporting the cause of her uncle, Federico, had made with France and the Pope. She accompanied him to his last refuge in his Kingdom, the island of Ischia. She spent the rest of her life in Naples under Spanish rule.

CHAPTER XVI

CATERINA SFORZA

OF all the Sforzas there is none better known or more deservedly so than Caterina, the redoubtable Lady of Forlì. She was the living embodiment of the qualities which won them their great position and which were sadly to seek in the legitimate children of Francesco. The daughter of Galeazzo Maria, she was born in 1463, when he was only seventeen, her mother being a beautiful married woman of Milan, Lucrezia Landriani. She was the only child of Lucrezia by Galeazzo Maria, but, besides several legitimate children, she had another natural daughter, Stella, to whom, as to her mother, Caterina remained genuinely attached. In character she might have been a daughter of Muzio Attendolo: she showed no trace of the Visconti weaknesses.

Caterina was early legitimized and brought up with the ducal family, for, as Commynes remarks, the Italians of that day made very little difference between legitimate and illegitimate children. At first she was left in the care of Bianca Maria, then of Bona, who treated her exactly as if she had been her own child. Their letters show the affection that existed between them; their very dissimilarity of character helped to draw the bond closer. Bona writes to her in Rome, "When we have good news of you (*di te*) we feel the joy that every good mother feels at the happiness of a dear daughter, such as you are to us."

In 1473, as has been narrated, she was married to Girolamo Riario, the so-called nephew of Pope Sixtus IV. An illegitimate daughter was often useful

for establishing relations with a Papal family and Cardinal Della Rovere had been warmly backed at the Conclave by the influence of Milan, in accordance with the Duke's orders. He was a native of Savona and therefore a subject of Milan, "a man of the basest and lowest origin", Machiavelli calls him, whose father was, like S. Peter, a fisherman; and Girolamo was generally held to be his son. With him began the evil days of the Papacy that culminated in the Borgia Pope, Alexander VI. Yet he was a great builder and art patron, giving his name to the Sistine Chapel and the Ponte Sisto and bringing the best artists to Rome from every part of the peninsula; Cardinal Riario had been charmed by the clever, beautiful, lively child when he visited Milan.

In 1477 Caterina left home to join her husband and was given a great reception at Imola, where the Rocca had recently been built by the Duke of Milan. Girolamo, who was the favourite of the Pope, was in Rome, whither it was not proposed that his bride should follow him, as it was the unhealthy season of the year. However, plans were changed and in May she went South. Her husband met her seven miles outside the city, greeting her with a demonstrative display of affection. All Rome turned out to see her on her official entry on the following day. She was escorted to the Vatican amid admiring crowds of Romans, where the marriage was again celebrated by the Holy Father. The short, thick-set, stern-faced peasant, with the hooked nose and the small, lively eyes, ex-Franciscan monk though he was, showed his true character, as well as his age, in his behaviour to every attractive woman who approached him. The slim, handsome, attractive girl of fifteen, with her exuberant vitality, caught his fancy at once. Taking off the necklace her husband had given her on the previous night, he slipped round her neck one worth four thousand ducats in its place and from that day he

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showed her special favour, treating her with a familiarity that scandalized the Romans. As the bride had arrived earlier than had been expected the Riario palace was not ready for her, so she was taken to one belonging to the Orsini instead. There she was welcomed by eighty Roman ladies, with whom she shook hands and chatted till she was summoned to the banquet by a boy dressed as an angel. There were nearly two hundred guests and twenty-two courses, after each five of which a boy appeared on a triumphal car and recited verses. During the meal there were the inevitable mythological pageants. Some *putti* also presented the bride with a number of animals, all cooked, but preserving their natural form. Many of the guests were terribly bored before the interminable meal was over.

The weak, cowardly, cruel Riario was no fit mate for such a bride. He was the chief instigator of the conspiracy of the Pazzi against the Medici in 1478, to which Giuliano fell a victim, though Lorenzo escaped. His motive is said to have been the fact that he could never feel secure in Imola so long as the Medici were in power. Nor was he satisfied with the failure of this attempt. It was to this crime that he owed his death, for henceforth Lorenzo showed himself as unrelenting and implacable an enemy as the most vindictive of Renaissance princes.

In 1480 the death of Pino degli Ordelaffi was followed by violent faction fighting in Forlì, with the consequence that Sixtus IV was able to get possession of the town and unite it with Imola in Riario's vicariate. The people of the two towns were pleased at falling into the hands of a Vicar of such prominence, especially when Riario, who had the purse of S. Peter behind him, abolished a number of taxes and found posts for sundry of his new subjects in Rome.

The arrival of the Vicar and his wife was eagerly awaited. A week before their coming in July, 1481,

a number of servants and heavily laden mules streamed into the town. Just before their arrival the Palazzo Pubblico of Imola had caught fire, but their astrologer was able to reassure them. They were enthusiastically greeted on their arrival. Sweets and tarts were scrambled from the palace windows, a wooden castle, representing the taking of Otranto by the Turks, was stormed, and there were other similar entertainments. Caterina awakened general admiration by her dancing, which was something quite new to this provincial town. But it was the wealth of their new lord that did most to impress and reassure his subjects. They were allowed to see the great *credenza*, or plate chest, loaded with magnificent silver and gold cups and other ware, which were changed every day for a week, being valued at 100,000 ducats. An impression hardly less vivid was made by the dresses of Caterina and her ladies.

Riario, conscious that, in the eyes of a large party, he was a usurper, kept out of sight as much as possible, hardly ever leaving the palace; this did not increase his popularity. Even at Imola, though he had spent freely in having the streets paved and the town improved in many ways, he was hardly less disliked than at Forlì. He appears also to have tyrannized over his wife, whom he flatly refused to allow to go to Milan. The Milanese envoy who had been sent to invite her describes her as "beautiful, fond of display and well supplied with jewels". He writes that, so far as he could see, "the said count neither means to come himself, nor to let her come". In that very year there was a conspiracy at Forlì to kill the Count and Countess and bring back the Ordelaffi. This was a great disappointment to the couple after all the concessions they had made. The Romagnols never lost a certain feeling of loyalty to the old ruling families, however badly they might have behaved. But it soon became clear that Lorenzo dei Medici was the

power behind the scenes. The Riarii went about surrounded by guards. In the autumn Girolamo returned to Rome, while Caterina went to Imola, where she felt more safe.

Girolamo now showed his very worst side. The Gonfalonier of the Church, who was to command the Papal army against the advancing Neapolitans, spent his time playing dice upon the altars of S. John Lateran or sitting astride the relic chest in the sacristy, losing enormous sums which should have gone to pay the troops. It was Roberto Malatesta who routed the enemy at the battle of Campo Morto, while Girolamo, who was a physical coward, lurked among the baggage. The Pope showed Malatesta the respect he deserved, hastening himself to bring him the Sacraments when he was dying of disease, though he arrived just too late. But the breath was hardly out of the general's body when he sent Girolamo to seize his town of Rimini. Florence, however, intervened to protect the boy Pandolfo, thus checkmating the hated Riario. In the circumstances it is not surprising that it was whispered that Girolamo had poisoned Malatesta.

In 1483 Girolamo was once more in Rome, by the special request of the ageing Pope, who felt the need of someone upon whom he could lean ; indeed, it was this need of the Popes, surrounded by intrigues and by enemies within the Sacred College, as well as without, that does much to explain and justify the position of the Papal nephews. He and his wife were particularly glad of an excuse for leaving, as a new conspiracy, with wide ramifications, engineered by the Ordelaffi, had just been discovered. This further proof of their unpopularity was seriously disconcerting and they were as anxious to avoid the additional odium of punishing the guilty as to escape with their lives. So they started for Rome after ordering the Governor to make the necessary enquiries and shed as little blood as possible.

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It was well that they did so, for in the following year the Pope died, his end hastened by disappointment at the peace of Bagnolo. Now it is that Caterina begins to show herself in the light in which she is best known to history. She determined to seize the Castle of S. Angelo, vowing that she would not give it up to anyone but the new Pope. As she rode through the streets the Romans saw in her a worthy daughter of the Sforzas and greeted her with cries of Duca, Duca! Announcing that she would hold the castle for her husband, she was admitted into it on August 14th. Cerratini describes her on this occasion as wise, brave, tall, well-knit and possessed of a handsome face. She spoke little. She wore a dress of green satin with a train two yards long, a large cloak of black velvet in the French style, a man's belt, with a purse of gold ducats. At her side was a curved falchion. "She was much feared by the men, whether mounted or on foot, because, when she had a weapon in her hand, she was hard and cruel."¹

Meanwhile the mob vented its hatred of Riario by sacking his palace, now the Corsini, where Cesare Borgia was soon to live. Riario was bought off with a large indemnity by the cardinals and gave up the command of the army, but it proved more difficult to induce his wife to surrender the castle. She was pregnant and far from well and at last, when a commission of cardinals appeared with her uncle Ascanio among them and she was informed that the Sacred College would not feel bound to carry out the terms of its agreement with her husband unless she gave way, she consented.

The new Pope, Innocent VIII, confirmed the rights of Riario to the vicariate, thanks largely to Giuliano della Rovere, Cardinal S. Pietro in Vincula, who dominated him completely. But there was danger.

¹ Pasolini, *C. Sforza*, I, p. 150. Pasolini is my chief authority for this chapter.

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Maddalena dei Medici, daughter of Lorenzo, married the son of the Pope, called Franschetto because of his dwarf stature, and Lorenzo would have been as glad of a chance to oust Riario from his vicariate and give it to Cibô as the Pope himself. The plots against him were often hatched over the Florentine border, where his enemies found a safe and handy refuge.

Now that he no longer had the Pope's treasure at his disposal Riario was obliged to reimpose some of the dues he had repealed. His straightforward speech to the Council of Forlì, in which he pointed out that, so long as he was rich, he had treated his people generously, but now that he was no longer so, it was but just that they should come to his help, won their sympathy, nor did the people bear him any ill will at first. Lavishness is rarely unpopular with the mob, least of all during the Renaissance. But the dues were rapidly increased to meet the growing expenditure and with them the discontent.

Caterina was beginning to take the lead more and more, leaving the heavy Girolamo in the background. She went to Milan in the hope of securing support, but was obliged to return almost immediately to nurse her husband, who was dangerously ill. The story of the trick—for such it appears to have been—by which, in conjunction with Codronchi, she got possession of the Ravaldino, the castle of Forlì, after the castellan had been murdered, and installed Tomaso Feo in his place, spending a whole night in the saddle, is worthy of an older generation of Sforza women, or of the woman who was to measure herself with Cesare Borgia. She rode straight back to Imola with Codronchi and her child was born the next day.

A few days later she was galloping back to Forlì; there was news of another and more dangerous conspiracy. It was all the elderly soldier who escorted her could do to keep pace with her. She herself conducted the examination of the accused, showing

remarkable common sense in her methods. On being told by her husband to do as she thought best, she had six of them hung, drawn and quartered, compelling the soldier who had admitted them to the gate to act as executioner. By this time the Romagnols must have recognized their virago of a Countess as one of themselves, a genuine chip of the old block. Now that the Count never left his room and refused to see anyone but his wife, it was rumoured that he was really dead and that Caterina was keeping his death secret, so the moment he could sit a horse she made him ride all round Imola in order to silence these rumours.

The growing discontent was rapidly coming to a head. One day in Lent the Count called to Checco Orsi, a prominent citizen of Forlì, to pay him the 200 ducats he owed for the duty on meat which he had farmed in the previous year and when he answered that he could not, as he had not got the money, an altercation took place. Checco was terrified, still more so when, a little later, he met the Count returning from Mass and he once more reminded him of the debt, with the result that there was another quarrel in the square outside the palace. Then, when the Count was back in the palace, leaning with his elbow on the ledge looking out of the window, as he was fond of doing, first an officer who had served with the Duke of Calabria, then another, Ludovico Pansechi, a Florentine, who had taken part in the conspiracy of the Pazzi, implored him to let them have their pay, which was long overdue, as they did not know where to turn for money. They were repulsed angrily by Riario, who had not recovered his temper after the altercation with Orsi. Like Orsi, who dared not leave his palace, these officers were afraid of what might happen. They quickly got together and decided to act in self-defence. Pasolini makes it clear that Lorenzo dei Medici was, as usual, behind the conspirators, egging them on, though he was careful to keep in the

background. They even declared that the Pope was privy to the plot, but this is much more doubtful. Giuliano della Rovere was back in Rome and his powerful influence was exercised in favour of the Riarii.

They endeavoured to carry out their plan on April 13th, the next day, but failed to find an opportunity. On the 14th a nephew of one of the conspirators, who was not in the secret, promised to signal to them when the Count's men had gone to supper and he was alone after his meal. They said they wanted to talk to him. Orsi, who had the right of entry to the palace unannounced, went in, while the two soldiers waited outside. Riario was leaning out of the window, enjoying the afternoon breeze. He was chatting with one or two companions in an excellent humour. It is interesting to remember that Melozzo of Forlì, the great painter, was his cup-bearer and very intimate with him, as with his wife. Seeing Orsi, Riario held out his hand, asking "Checco mio" how he was. Orsi answered that he had heard from a friend and would have the money shortly. As he spoke he drew a dagger and stabbed him. The Count, who was unarmed, was only wounded. Exclaiming, "Ah, traitor," he first tried to take refuge under a table, then to reach his wife's room. But the soldiers, who were listening at the door, burst in and finished him off. It was exactly ten years to a month since he had planned the Pazzi conspiracy, for which he had hired Pansechi.

When the frightened servants burst into her room with the news, Caterina had heavy chests and everything that could be of use piled against the door. By her orders they all shouted for help from the windows. An attempt was made to kill the murderers, but they were soon reinforced by the fickle Romagnols, ready, as ever, to join in a conspiracy against their rulers. The nobles shut themselves in their palaces and the mob was delighted to have a free hand and loot. The

door of the room of the Countess was quickly broken down. The conspirators found her with her mother, her sister, Stella, and her children. As they were led off, one of the captors ventured to run his hand round the neck of Stella to see whether she was wearing a necklace or other jewellery. She repulsed him with a blow worthy of her sister.

Caterina's partisans had retired to the Rocca, but she had had the forethought to ask some of them to write to Milan and to Bologna for help. Her husband's body was thrown into the square, where it was stripped and haled about till it was rescued by some monks. The palace was sacked. Caterina and her family were confined and carefully guarded in the palace of the Orsi. Forlì decided to give itself to the Church. Monsignor Savelli came to take it over in the name of the Pope. He protested against the treatment of the Countess and her family, saying that the Turks could not have behaved worse to them. A priest actually bade her surrender the Rocca, or she would be starved to death, and informed her that her husband had been killed for his sins against priests. Devout though she was by nature, she sent for one of the Orsi and, without deigning to answer the priest, said, "O Messer Ludovico, I beg you, for the love of God, take this priest away from me."

Then she was conducted to the Rocca and made to summon the Castellan, Tomaso Feo, and order him to give it up; otherwise she would be killed. This he refused to do. The soldier, Ronco, guessing, like everyone else, that Feo was acting by her orders, threatened to run her through if he persisted in his refusal. Quite unmoved, she told him that, do what he might, he could never frighten her; she was a daughter of one who knew not fear. Meanwhile Savelli had the Countess and her family taken from the Orsi and all packed into a small guard room in the Rocchetta of the Porta S. Pietro. She told them

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that all would now be well. Muzio Attendolo and Duke Francesco were never known to lose heart, nor did they know what fear meant. Hence they had escaped from all dangers and become great princes. Her uncle would soon be sending a strong force from Milan to rescue her.

By means of a trusty servant she got into communication with Feo, who sent to Savelli to say that he would obey the Countess and surrender the Rocca, but, as he had never yet been a traitor, he must have a few words with her first. Savelli consented, though the Orsi, who knew her, protested energetically. They had to give way. Once more she was taken before the Rocca. Feo refused to surrender, but promised to admit her, if she were alone. The Orsi again protested, but her friend Ercolani—"uomo da bene ed assai sagace e malizioso"—pointed out that they had all her children in their hands and Monsignor Savelli would listen to no objections. Once over the draw-bridge she laughed at them all. She immediately ordered the guns to be trained upon the town, in case harm befell her children. As she was pregnant and utterly exhausted, Feo sent her to lie down. She was asleep when the three hours' truce was over, and the Orsi to their fury, if not to their surprise, learnt that she had no intention of returning. Then followed the well-known scene when the children were brought before the castle, imploring her to yield, or they would be killed. According to the story she raised her dress, exclaiming, "And can't you see, you fools, that I am already making others?" The more probable version, recorded by the chronicler Bernardi, who was in Forlì, is that the nurse, her sister Stella and her eldest son, Ottaviano, were put up in turn to appeal to her, but Feo would not have her waked and when the cries of Ottaviano became so loud that there was danger of her hearing them, he told his men to make all the noise they could and even fired a few

shots to drive off the Orsi. Caterina came out in her night attire, having been waked by the uproar, and was pacified by Feo, who told her that the Orsi had at last gone off quietly. The orthodox story does not appear in the gossiping Cobelli either, who was also there, though these chroniclers tell other tales of her which show how absolutely she was in her element among the rough, coarse Romagnols, from whom her ancestors had sprung.

It was now clear that no help was to be expected from the Pope, while an army of 12,000 men was on the way from Milan, led by Galeazzo da Sanseverino and Brambilla, as Giovanni da Bergamo was called. It was after this bloodless campaign that Il Moro made Sanseverino Commander-in-Chief of his forces, an appointment which proved disastrous to his House. Instead of relief from Rome, there appeared fifty horsemen who entered the Rocca to assist Caterina, having been sent her by Cardinal Raffaello Riario.

Realizing that their cause was hopeless, the Orsi tried to get the Riario children into their power, but their guards refused to give them up. The chronicler ascribes their failure to the intervention of the saints, because, had any harm befallen them, Caterina would undoubtedly have had the town sacked. The Orsi fled, leaving their aged father and the women behind them. Caterina refused to allow the city to be sacked. If she did, she knew that she would never recover the things that had been pillaged ; also, she knew only too well the cruel fate that would have overtaken the women and children. This consideration for her own sex is one of the best traits in her character. She had a deep and genuine sympathy with the sufferings of the women in those hard days and was continually intervening to protect and succour them. Similarly she would allow no harm to befall the Orsi women. Some of the captains of the Milanese were furious, as they had consented to come upon the expedition

without their pay on the understanding that they should be allowed to sack Forlì. But Caterina had her way. She refused even to let the troops enter the town. The result was that the people were soon shouting, Duca! Duca! Ottaviano! Ottaviano! Contessa! Contessa! with wild enthusiasm and bringing back stolen property to the palace, but the Orsi had carried off most of the valuables. The fussy, curious Cobelli, good chronicler though he is, shows what this enthusiasm was worth. Until they fled, he was hand-in-glove with the Orsi; he had taught their ladies dancing; now, he cannot say enough in praise of the Countess.

Caterina was appointed guardian of her son. It was a proud moment for her when she rode out of the Rocca between Galeazzo Sanseverino and Brambilla through the streets lined with Milanese troops in order to impress her people with the greatness of her relatives. Milan was then one of the wealthiest states of the peninsula and its army appeared worthy of it. She was at her best with soldiers and the testimony to her beauty and her charm is universal. That day she dined with Luffo Numai, the most loyal of the nobles.

Then began the vengeance, which was thoroughly Romagnol in its brutality. The men who had flung the Count's body from the palace window were suspended for a few moments from it, then the rope was cut and they were torn limb from limb by the mob in the square below: the very fat was scraped from their bones. For one of them the Countess had interceded with her husband more than once out of pity for his mother, and had provided him with clothes herself. Old Orsi, who had cursed his sons for their folly, had told them that they should have finished off the whole brood while they were about it. It would have been their only chance. This remark roused Caterina's implacable resentment. After seeing his

home levelled to the ground before his eyes—he was eighty-five years old—he was taken to the square and bound on to a plank. This was fastened to the tail of a horse, which was driven round and round the square, which was covered with blood and the mangled remains of the conspirators.

In May Galeotto Manfredi was murdered at Faenza. When the assassins hired by his wife failed to kill him, she seized a sword and ran him through the body herself. She was a daughter of Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna. Caterina sent off Brambilla with some of the Milanese to her aid and young Astorre Manfredi, whose fate was to be so closely linked with her own, was proclaimed lord. Brambilla was killed in a riot there, to the real sorrow of the Countess.

Caterina was a Sforza also in temperament. There was a persistent rumour that she was to heal the feud by marrying young Antonio Ordelaffi, who paid her some long visits and seems to have lived for a while in one of her villas. This annoyed her. She had the chronicler Cobelli imprisoned because he had painted a number of shields and other objects—painting was also one of his varied accomplishments—with the arms of the Riarii and the Ordelaffi. The consequence was that he could not say enough against her in the rest of his chronicle. Obviously Ordelaffi would gladly have recovered his state in this way. Venice, however—for he was employed as a condottiere—thought it best to recall him.

The story of the way in which the Countess got the Ravaldino of Forlì into her hands is delightfully characteristic. Tomaso Feo refused to surrender it except to Ottaviano, even when she gave him her sister Bianca for wife. One hot August day in 1490 she invited him to come and see the new gardens she was laying out, somewhat on the lines of the Barco of Milan. There they sat down under a fig tree and, at her suggestion, began eating figs together. Gradually

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her charm, which she exerted to the utmost, and the strength of her temperament began to take effect. She asked him to go with her to her bedroom. Very reluctant, at first he refused. However, she persisted and at last he followed her. As soon as he entered her apartments he was seized and imprisoned. A servant of Feo's swam the moat and warned the garrison, and his men, fearing for his life, trained the guns upon the Countess's rooms in the palace. A ball narrowly missed her head, but she remained quite unmoved.

Then she summoned Tomaso's brother, handsome young Giacomo Feo. She may have already been secretly married to him—she dared not marry him openly, or she would have lost the guardianship of Ottaviano—and told him that he was to be Castellan of the Ravaldino. He began to raise objections, saying that, after the long service of his family to their lords, he could not consent, if his brother had been guilty of treason. But she reassured him, adding that no harm should befall Tomaso, who was soon back in her service. It is known that Caterina had a son by Feo, though several people were tortured to death for daring to say so. Feo is described as handsome, with a slim, neat figure, and virtuous. Continually about his mistress, he rapidly became all-powerful. Soon he was in command of all her forces and of all her castles. There was naturally a good deal of ill-feeling and plots began to be hatched.

The French invasion placed Caterina in a difficult position. The Florentine ambassador wrote that she was very suspicious; "she does not allow a living soul to enter Forlì and she has made it a capital offence for a man to receive anyone who enters the town in his house". She was being urged, on the one hand, by Ludovico Sforza to await the coming of the French King, on the other, by Cardinal Riario to allow the Neapolitan troops to take up their quarters in her



[Alinari Photo]

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By Palmezziani

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territory. Her state was small, but it was important, for it lay across one of the two main routes from North to South and also on the road to Tuscany by the Val di Lamone. Moreover the prestige of her name was great and her adhesion to one side or the other would mean a real addition of strength, in spite of the smallness of her army. At first she said she should remain neutral. Finally, she decided to desert her own family and throw in her lot with Naples, as a state that was being wrongfully attacked: also, Pope Alexander VI had treated her ambassador in the same exuberant, gushing way in which he had behaved towards her uncle Ascanio, promising to be a father to her son, Ottaviano. Remembering her intimacy with him in earlier days in Rome, she thought she could count upon his friendship.

But when the French sacked Mordano and Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, did not lift a finger to help her, she changed sides, cursing the cowardice of her allies and wishing that she had remained true to her Sforza kin. The Neapolitans ravaged the country as they retired, but they were as lambs compared to the French, who treated their allies just as they did their enemies. Their behaviour made them as bitterly hated in Romagna as elsewhere in Italy. They broke up and sacked the mills and even robbed the peasants of their seed-corn. Yet Caterina entertained the leaders of her new allies, Stuart d'Aubigny, Ligny, the Sanseverino brothers, Gonzaga of Mantua and others, at a splendid banquet. The French appear to have been lost in admiration of their hostess, whom they learnt to admire even more when she was their enemy, for the energy with which she defended herself. Charles VIII, then at Siena, tactfully gratified her by making Feo a French baron.

Caterina refused to join the allies against France after the capture of Naples, to the annoyance of Ludovico, who disliked his niece showing such independence.

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More and more she was turning to her neighbours, the Florentines, who had always attracted her, even before the murder of her husband; and there was now nothing to stand in the way of an alliance.

Feo's arrogance and his complete ascendancy over the Countess were making him bitterly hated and rapidly destroying Caterina's popularity. A Florentine gives a picture of the handsome young man, dressed in a doublet of crimson satin and a cloak of gold brocade, seated on the edge of a window, while by him in a high wooden chair is Caterina, wrapped in a cloak of white damask with a black scarf round her—"for beauty they were a well-matched pair". Unless Messer Jacopo is there, she does not speak. What the Countess says, he confirms, and vice versa. They informed the Florentine that it was generally thought that all the armed men who came from Lombardy to Romagna were sent to drive Messer Jacopo from power, "but they will endure any fate and Madonna will sacrifice all her friends and children and property; they will rather give their souls to the Devil and their state to the Turk than give up each other." And woe to Bello if he breathed a word of this secret to anyone but the Florentine Commissioner. She would seek him out at the end of the world and have him cut in pieces. It is clear that Bello saw trouble ahead.¹ But it is easy to understand how the Countess enjoyed the love of handsome, manly young Messer Jacopo after her years with Riario.

Feo was absolute master of the Vicariate, as of Caterina. He rode about the towns as if they belonged to him, splendidly dressed and with a large escort. All the revenue passed through his hands and he paid the troops. It seemed that Caterina took a positive pleasure in letting him dominate her. She submitted to his slightest whim.

¹ Pasolini, *C. Sforza*, I, pp. 150-1.

No one hated Feo more than the Marcobelli and the Orcioli. To these families more than to any other of her subjects Caterina owed the recovery of her state and her gratitude to them was genuine. She even banished some of her own friends, much against her will, to please them. She was now compelled to imprison some of the Orcioli on account of a public outburst they had made against the favourite with uncompromising Romagnol violence. The natural result followed. They determined to get Feo out of the way. In any case his overbearing ways were rapidly making him insufferable. He once boxed the ears of Ottaviano, who was now sixteen years old. He was neither clever, nor spirited, and in later life, when a cardinal, was of enormous bulk; but he was urged on all hands to assert himself and it was one of his guards, Ghetti, who promised to make an end of Feo with the connivance of the Orcioli. A couple of rather shady priests were also in the plot. An attempt in church failed, for Messer Jacopo was on his guard. Then, on August 14th, 1495, Caterina was returning from a hunting party in a *carretta*, with her sons and a number of guards and, of course, Feo, on horseback. Inside the gate Ghetti came forward and was greeted by Feo, whereupon Ghetti's servant ran him through while Ghetti fell upon him, as also did the priests and others, disfiguring him by striking at his face. They flung his body into a ditch.

Caterina jumped upon the horse of one of her guards and galloped to the Rocca. Her sons Ottaviano and Cesare, being involved in the plot, did not dare to follow her, but took refuge in the house of a friend. The conspirators went about saying that they had acted upon the orders of the Countess and of Ottaviano. When the truth became known Ghetti was cut down in the street while trying to escape.

Caterina now confessed that Feo had been her husband and her vengeance was terrible. The troops

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were allowed to indulge in any cruelty they liked against the prisoners and no mercy was shown to women or children. The worst atrocities of the Romagna were re-enacted. The houses of the Marcobelli and the Orcioli were sacked and levelled to the ground and they themselves taken into the Rocca, where they disappeared after being horribly tortured. Nothing could daunt Caterina. On one occasion a large crowd appeared before the Rocca surrounding her sons and promising to protect them. Immediately the drawbridge was lowered, a strong body of men-at-arms came out, advanced right into the frightened crowd and seized the young men. Then Caterina herself appeared on a tower and four shots were fired to disperse the mob. Ottaviano was imprisoned in the Rocca, where no one was allowed to speak to him, while Scipione, a bastard son of Riario, who had dared to reproach her for her cruelty, was flung into a dungeon and kept there for eighteen months. He came out with ruined health and immediately took refuge in Venetian territory. When she was accused of having Feo murdered and using the murder as a pretext for getting rid of her enemies—an absurd charge—she answered proudly that a Sforza was not in the habit of adopting such methods of getting rid of a foe.

If Caterina's subservience to Feo had made her unpopular with her subjects, the cruelty of her revenge permanently alienated many of them. Indeed, her behaviour awakened general horror and consternation. The Milanese envoy at Bologna wrote that he was distressed at the news, because she was a Sforza, and people were talking infamously about her. Caterina herself afterwards felt deep remorse for what she had done, especially for her cruelty to the women and even to babes in arms.

Caterina was in close correspondence with her uncle, Ludovico Sforza, consulting him about the many

difficulties that threatened her in the general unrest. He proved a better friend to her than any of her other relatives. She had a high opinion of his diplomatic skill and the very differences of their characters enabled them to get on together. He could not fail to respect her. But he was becoming more and more perturbed at her growing intimacy with Florence, as at bottom he thought that he had a right to control her foreign policy and keep her in a kind of family vassalage.

This change in her orientation from Milan to Florence was due to the influence of a man. In 1496 Giovanni dei Medici, of the younger branch of the family, known as Popolano, was sent to Forlì to represent Florence. He and his brother, Lorenzo, had fled to Charles VIII after a quarrel with their cousin, Piero. They had played their part in encouraging the French to advance into Florentine territory and, after the expulsion of Piero, had supported the new government. Giovanni was as attractive as he was handsome. Possibly the wily Florentines had chosen him for that very reason; it is not surprising that he soon won his way to the susceptible heart of the lady of Forlì. As early as 1496 Ludovico was informed that Giovanni had spent some days with his niece and been much caressed and that persons who should know what they were talking about, said that she would marry him "to satisfy her appetite", while Giovanni Bentivoglio reported that she did whatever he asked her. Medici was already occupying Feo's rooms and she consulted him upon everything. Once again she was enjoying the privilege of having a man about her whom she could not only love, but upon whom she could lean.

Venice was particularly perturbed at this rapprochement with Florence. The Doge said that the fact that she was a woman excused her, but, since she was very liable to fall and committed many errors, her

uncle should bring clearly before her her duty in the present state of Italy. Ludovico sent her a special envoy. Conveniently forgetting Messer Jacopo, she informed him that she had not the slightest desire to take a husband since the death of the Count, but, instead of joining the League, as Ludovico wished her to do, she expressed her intention of remaining neutral. It was true that the Florentines had sought her help, but she suspected them of desiring to ruin her and she preferred to enjoy her state under the protection of her beloved uncle. And she called God to witness the truth of her words ; if she was lying, the Duke might deprive her of her state. The ambassador went on to protest against the presence of Giovanni dei Medici, which, he informed her, was injuring her good name. Her reply was long and characteristic. In the course of it she said that she kept him there largely out of affection for her uncle. Later Giovanni dei Medici repeated the same arguments, which he may have helped to prepare, "but with less art and less grace". Caterina could speak with rare charm and eloquence ; she became very voluble when angry.

Soon after this interview it was known that she was married to the Medici. Ludovico and Ottaviano both consented to the marriage, which had to be kept nominally secret. In 1498, the year in which she gave birth to her last child, who was to become famous as Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and to be the father of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke of Florence, the Florentines made both her and her children citizens of their city, because no Florentine might marry a foreigner. And it was to Florence that she sent Ottaviano on his first campaign against Pisa with a troop such as she, with her passion for training soldiers—a passion which she doubtless inherited from the condottieri ancestors to whom she was always referring—knew would do both him and her credit. Twice did the delighted Florentines review them. She also

sent her husband to help and advise him. But he was soon back again in poor health ; before the end of the year he was dead and she was left a widow for the third and last time at the age of thirty-five. According to Pasolini, though letters from a number of her old soldiers and others prove the warmth of their devotion and show that she continued to exercise her old fascination over the fighting men, there is no truth in the not unnatural rumours that various men in high position were her lovers. When she was seized with a passion it swept her away so irresistibly that she was unable to conceal it.

In 1498 Ludovico sent Count Caiazzo to help her against the threatened advance of the Venetians. His brother Fracassa had also been in her service earlier and she had found him very difficult to get on with, as she had complained to her uncle. Ludovico urged her to tolerate him, since, if he sometimes used a bad word, he made up for it by his good actions. In spite of her masculine qualities—or should we say her strength of character?—Caterina possessed all the feminine graces, being fond of music and an excellent dancer. In her younger days in Rome it is said that she liked to listen to able or learned men talk, but this was not a practice she continued when she came to the Romagna. She was a woman of action with no real interest in literature or art, though her position in Rome threw her for a time into a society in which literature and art and above all learning were prominent and she was clever enough to try to adapt herself to it. Baldassare Castiglione tells a well-known story in the *Cortegiano*. One day when she had invited the wooden, boorish Fracassa to dinner, she asked him to dance, but he declined, as he also did when she asked him whether he would like to hear some music, saying that it was not his business. “What is your business, then?” asked his hostess. “Fighting,” came the answer. “Then I think that, since you are not at

war and not needed to fight, it would be wise for you to have yourself well greased and put away in a cupboard with all your arms until you are wanted, so that you will not get more rusty than you are." And with these words she left him, looking very foolish, amid shouts of laughter.

Her trouble with Venice was due to her loyalty to the Florentines, from whom she could get no help, in spite of all her appeals. But the moment they were threatened themselves they characteristically urged her to send them all the light horse she could. She was indignant, but she sent the men, for she was a loyal friend. She was continually training the peasants of her state and sending them off to fight, generally to Milan, and she kept a tight hold upon them even when away from her. Men who failed to appear at her orders to drill had good cause to regret their folly. One defaulter was given such a dose of the strappado that he nearly died. Those who had no breastplate or lance were supplied with them, the price being deducted from their pay. Soldiers she would and did have.

In July, 1499, Machiavelli appeared in Forlì, with orders to come to a new agreement. This was his first diplomatic mission, his first important work for the republic. He was to make the terms as economical as possible, but to manage to satisfy the Countess, as she was too valuable a friend to lose. She had hinted that, if they did not retain Ottaviano in the *condotta* which he had foolishly resigned without her orders, she would throw herself into the arms of her uncle, with whom Florence was at the moment at war. Machiavelli was to point out that, since Ottaviano had resigned his *condotta*, Florence had no further obligations towards him, but he was to offer him a new one of not more than 10,000 ducats. When he had his audience the Milanese ambassador was present. Caterina listened attentively, but informed him that

she had always been satisfied with the words of the Florentines, never with their actions ; she had never been treated as she deserved. Machiavelli noted that she was always drilling her subjects and sending them off to Ludovico at Milan. There were a number of Florentines holding high places in the Vicariate, but the Milanese ambassador seemed to be all-powerful. However, she appeared to be ready to accept his terms—he had raised his offer of a *condotta* to 12,000 ducats—but he could not be sure, as she had always “ stood upon her dignity ”. When he presented himself, ready to sign the agreement, she told him in the presence of the Milanese ambassador that, after thinking matters over, she could not do so, unless the Florentines would undertake to defend her state. As they refused, there could be no further discussion on the matter. However, the Florentines had gained their point. The Countess had not broken with them. Machiavelli’s letters had made a great impression on his government, but the Lady of Forlì had certainly shown herself the cleverer diplomatist.

Such was the fame of Caterina’s beauty—she was said to be the most beautiful and graceful woman of her day—that her portraits were in great demand. Machiavelli’s friend, the Chancellor, Bonaccorsi, asked him to get him a likeness of her. She took much trouble to preserve her looks, as may be gathered from her book of recipes of all kinds, which has been preserved. In the year before her death she had a recipe for a face-wash sent her. Her complexion was remarkable and she took the greatest care of it, as also of her beautiful white teeth. She liked others to do the same, saying that, in accordance with her principles, she wished all the recipes for beauty used at her court to be made generally known. The information in this book ranges from a way to whiten the face that has been burnt by the sun to slow poisons or methods for procuring abortion or a way of making a light scudo

or ducat weigh heavy without danger to the conscience. This she had learnt from Cosimo dei Medici, possibly through her grandfather, Francesco, if not from her last husband.

Caterina went into every detail of the household herself and insisted on the strictest accounts from her servants. Like Beatrice d'Este she was not ashamed to sew as regularly as any of her women. There is a letter from a young relative in France thanking her for seven shirts in the French style which she had made for him. But, like every other Italian ruler in those troubled times, she was generally in financial difficulties. The Orsi had robbed her of most of her valuables and she had to pawn all the jewels and plate that remained to her.

Like her fellow Romagnols she was vengeful, ready to send assassins after an escaped enemy to the uttermost ends of the peninsula, as she frankly admitted, when Ludovico charged her with the fact. If she never forgave an injury, she never forgot a benefit, though, like other petty despots, she was often rewarded with shameful ingratitude. But she was just, on the whole, making no distinction between rich and poor, and she kept her word to an unusual degree among the princes of the Renaissance. In fact, the Madonna of Forlì was something of a survival from the earlier and more heroic epoch of the ancestors to whom she rarely lost an opportunity of referring and upon whom she was continually endeavouring to model herself. If she took no part in the great intellectual and artistic movement of the Renaissance, she possessed sterling qualities for the lack of which Italy fell an easy victim to the invading French and Spaniards, who were to hold her in thrall for the next couple of centuries and more. The later life of the Lady of Forlì, with her plucky resistance to Cesare Borgia, lies outside this volume.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TWO LAST DUKES OF MILAN

THE last of the Sforzas to rule in Milan were the sons of Ludovico and Beatrice, Massimiliano and Francesco, two puppet dukes who held the Duchy on sufferance, the first from the Swiss, the second from the Emperor Charles V. They had been brought up at the Imperial court at Innsbruck by the Empress Bianca Maria till her death in 1510, and then in the Netherlands by the daughter of Maximilian, Margaret of Austria, who was regent there for Charles, the future Emperor. The consequence was that they were far more German than Italian in their ways and had both acquired a profound respect for the Imperial authority.

Massimiliano's chance came in 1512. After the crushing defeat of the Venetians at Agnadello in 1509 by the League of Cambrai, Giuliano della Rovere, now Pope Julius II, who was the inspiring force of the League, came to the conclusion that Venice had been sufficiently weakened to be no longer formidable. As he was anything but anxious to see Italy dominated by his ally, Louis XII of France, he made peace with the Venetians and was soon at the head of the Holy League, of which the Venetians and Ferdinand of Aragon were also members. Its purpose was to drive the French out of Italy. In 1512 at the hotly contested battle of Ravenna the French proved victorious, but their victory was neutralized by the death of their young general, Gaston de Foix. The brilliancy of his leadership, like the rapidity of his movements, had awakened universal admiration. Had he lived, he would certainly have pushed on and captured Rome

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and punished the old warrior Pope, though Julius would undoubtedly, as the Popes always did, have survived the blow. The Leaguers were led by Don Ramon de Cardona, Viceroy of Naples. The new French Commander, La Palice, had neither the ability, nor the absolute authority of his predecessor.

The dominating personality in Switzerland at this time was Matthias Schinner, Cardinal and Archbishop of Sion. The Pope made him his legate with the Swiss troops who were to deal with the French in the Milanese. The Swiss had long felt a vital interest in Lombardy as an outlet for their trade and a source of their food supply. It is true that there was always a strong French party in the cantons, the members of which enjoyed French pensions, but, thanks not a little to the influence of Schinner, whose demands Louis XII had found excessive, they had now, as a whole, broken with them. In the Duchy of Milan the oppressed inhabitants were sick of French rule: they could hardly fail to gain by a change. Gaston de Foix had shown his genius as much in the awful thoroughness with which he had sacked Brescia before Ravenna as in his victory. When Schinner announced that he meant to make Massimiliano Sforza Duke of Milan, the news greatly improved the chances of the Swiss, for the Duchy was delighted at the prospect of once more having a Duke of its own and a Sforza to boot. The Emperor withdrew his contingent from the French army and allowed the Swiss to advance by the Brenner, with the result that La Palice was compelled to take refuge on the other side of the Alps.

Schinner made Alessandro Sforza, a bastard son of Galeazzo Maria, governor of Cremona, while Pavia gladly welcomed back its old governor, Giovanni Sforza, Bishop of Genoa, a bastard son of Duke Francesco. The Milanese would hear of no ruler but a Sforza. Ludovico's exactions were forgotten and his reign remembered as a golden age. Ottaviano

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Sforza, Bishop of Lodi, a brother of Alessandro, became Regent in Milan, being greeted with the ringing of bells and the old cry of Sforza ! Sforza ! He governed admirably. For one thing, he restored all the surviving officials of the days of Ludovico to their posts. Unfortunately the Swiss who garrisoned the city showed their usual rapacity, plundering wherever they found a chance. They refused to respect even the gold coffin of Gaston de Foix, which was rifled from the Cathedral. Their one thought was their pay. The moment it fell into arrears the best of them marched off home, plundering as they went to recoup themselves. Even Schinner was powerless ; he soon saw his army reduced to half its original strength, only the inferior troops remaining. One must read detailed descriptions of these appalling years to understand the misery of the inhabitants. The wonder is that there was anything left to plunder or that they found means to keep body and soul together.

Massimiliano Sforza was now twenty-two. As his portraits imply, he possessed neither ability, nor character. Though as a child he was the very image of his mother, he seems to have been entirely lacking in any of the good qualities of his parents. Yet the *Libro del Jesus*, with its delightful illustrations, many of which are reproduced by Malaguzzi-Valeri, proves the care that was lavished upon his education in early infancy. Hardly able to read or write, he was continually bewailing his misfortunes, his poverty or his ignorance. Nervous and restless, he was never still. It is said that he never laughed. Isabella d'Este noted that his food and his clothes were German.

When he reached Innsbruck, Massimiliano found ambassadors waiting to tell him that, if possible, "all Milan and the other towns would rise from their deepest foundations to go to meet him and kiss his hands in humility and respect", and that they were ready to submit to any suffering or danger in order to

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keep him in health and preserve him. But his real position was brought home to him when Matthias Lang, Cardinal de Gurk, came North and informed him with all possible tact that he had better stay where he was till the Emperor and the Pope had come to an agreement about his restoration. Such was his respect for the Emperor that nothing would have induced him to move till he had received permission to do so. This did not arrive till October. On his way he stopped at Mantua, where he received a warm welcome from his aunt, the Marchesana Isabella, who always felt a special maternal interest in the children of Ludovico and Beatrice. He refused to advance beyond Cremona till Gurk, who was to represent the Emperor, had arrived. Those who saw him were not favourably impressed. Morone wrote, "He seemed to me, whether from character or education, to shrink from public business and to have very little desire to win the state and even less to retain it. . . . Perhaps when he has tasted the sweets of power, he will feel differently. But, to speak frankly, in the opinion of one and all of those who have spoken to him, there is no promise of anything superior or noble or glorious about him, nor has he the bearing of a prince."¹

The ambassadors ventured to protest against such deference to the Emperor and the Duke did enter Milan incognito in answer to their requests. He made a speech to the Swiss in which he gratefully acknowledged that he owed his restoration to them alone. He had ceded Lugano and Locarno, which have remained in Swiss possession ever since, to the Cantons, and they already held Bellinzona. He also undertook to give them a subsidy on condition that they defended him. Swiss imports paid no duty till they reached the gates of Milan. The Confederation had certainly been well rewarded for its services to the Duke. Massimiliano left the town that night. So

¹ Kohler, *Les Suisses*, p. 534.

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disgusted were the Swiss that they began to talk of breaking off the alliance, but fortunately the Cardinal of Gurk arrived.

At S. Estorgio, where, like most other persons of note making state entries into Milan, the young Duke halted to pay his respects to S. Peter Martyr and to don the ducal robes before entering the city, a quarrel arose between Cardinals Gurk and Sion and Don Ramon de Cardona. Each of them claimed the privilege of robing him in the white ducal mantle. Massimiliano cut the knot by putting it on himself. The Swiss headed the procession, followed by the Duke on horseback under the canopy, then Schinner, Gurk, Cardona and the Papal ambassadors, one of whom was Lorenzo di Campeggio. There was more trouble when the Duke was to be presented with the keys of Milan. He was about to give the privilege to Gurk, when the Swiss said that, if he did so, after all that they had done for him, they would withdraw their protection. The Cardinal himself gave way and it became manifest that the Swiss were the real masters of the situation. They took the lead in the rest of the day's proceedings. Over the Porta Ticinese, by which the Duke, as usual, entered, was the inscription, "Tandem lux rediit." In spite of the pouring rain—it was December 29th—the Milanese turned out in large numbers to welcome their new ruler. The streets were decorated and several triumphal arches had been erected. Outside the Corte d'Arengo the Duke was addressed by Good Fortune in the form of a young man who, after rehearsing all that he had done for other nations, apologized for coming so late to the House of Sforza and promised to confer every favour upon the Duke. All this time the French guns were firing upon the city from the castle so effectively that Massimiliano dared not take up his residence in his palace. Before they left—and Massimiliano did all he could to induce them to stay as long as possible

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—he again admitted to the Swiss that he owed them everything. The Milanese, by the way, called the Swiss chicory, which was then mixed with syrup for people with bad digestions.

Quarrels began at once between the allies. Schinner would not allow the claims of the Venetians to Crema and the frontier of the River Adda and was most indignant at their refusal to do more than provide their own share of the pay of the Swiss. But his attempts at high-handed methods failed with such skilled diplomatists. After the death of Julius II Venice changed sides and came to an understanding with France.

In January, 1513, Isabella d'Este arrived on a visit to her nephew for the carnival, by his special request. With her she brought some of her most attractive ladies, who, according to Prato, might be better described as priestesses of Venus. She made her entry by torchlight and was more popular than ever. She seemed like the living embodiment of the return of the good old times. The doings of the fair Brognina did much to justify Prato's description of her ladies. Both Cardinal Gurk and Don Ramon de Cardona made violent love to her. Isabella described to her husband how, one evening, when they were all going out to a dinner, they both fell upon the girl and kissed her passionately, to the agony of her Mantuan admirers. Next day Cardona sent her twenty-five yards of crimson velvet and twenty-five of black, "the crimson for the pleasure she had given him, the black for the shame he knew he had caused her". Indeed, the Viceroy was so successful that Isabella had to get rid of her and place her in a convent at Mantua.

We get a glimpse of the "avara povertà di Catalogna" of Dante, the poverty-stricken Don Diego at whom his Italian victims poked endless fun. The Spaniards actually cut the gold buttons from the coats of the Milanese nobles in the Duke's own palace, as

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well as the gold-embroidered devices on the cloak of the Marchesana of Mantua, with all the skill of professional pickpockets. While in Milan that "Machiavelli in petticoats" did not waste her time. She was busy helping her husband and her friends and relations. Among other things she successfully rescued some compromising letters of her Francophil brother, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, from the Papal Nuncio. In spite of the French guns the Duke was squandering money recklessly on balls and dinners and tournaments. So popular was his aunt that she was told that, if she did not come for carnival next year, the Duke and his friends would fetch her by armed force, "con la furia de li Svizzeri", with the fury of the Swiss.

Isabella's husband was sulking at home. He had been patched up by a specialist in *mal francese* and she felt a horror of his presence, keeping away from him as much as possible. He was angry at her long absence, complaining, not, perhaps, altogether without reason, that she had made herself a public scandal, thanks to the behaviour of La Brognina. Isabella answered indignantly that she was not a girl to have her days and her steps measured; how modern it sounds for the Cinquecento! She was merely doing her duty to her nephew and her husband. She had made him many friends and there had been no scandal.

The Milanese were quickly disillusioned. The people in the rural districts were no better treated by the soldiery than of yore; indeed, the disorder was, if anything, worse. Now that he could count on Venice Louis XII sent another army into Lombardy, where there were actual movements in one or two places in favour of the French. Trivulzio, who commanded, wrote to friends in Milan that it would not be long before he sent the Moretto, as he called Massimiliano, though Sanudo always refers to him as the Duchetto, to Loches, like his father. But on this

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occasion Massimiliano showed an energy and a courage worthy of his mother, though unfortunately, with his temperament, these flashes never lasted long. He promptly joined such Swiss as he had at Novara, where they were besieged by the French. It was rumoured that he was really their prisoner, and, as Prato puts it, there was robbing and killing in Milan, "such as times of liberty require". Without waiting for reinforcements, on June 6th, 1513, the Swiss marched out from Novara by night and fell upon the French army of over 20,000 men with such fury at Ariotta that they carried the guns and were able to turn them on their owners. The French were soon streaming over the Alps in headlong rout. The Duke himself played his part in the battle till he was firmly led away. The Swiss lost heavily, but they killed some 10,000 of the French. They had neither artillery, nor cavalry of their own, with the result that the French losses in the pursuit were far lighter than they would otherwise have been. Thus on the very ground where, thirteen years before, they had betrayed Ludovico Sforza, the Swiss infantry, unsupported, officered by some of the same captains, had utterly defeated a French army more than twice their number led by the very men who had commanded the force that had captured Il Moro, Trivulzio and La Trémouille. This was the first time the French had been thoroughly beaten in Italy. The Venetians were defeated in the East by Cardona and Don Prospero Colonna. Lastly, the castle of Milan surrendered on November 19th. Thus, says Prato, "our Duke Massimiliano, who had hitherto only sat on the horse, came to have the bridle in his hands; but the spurs were applied by the Swiss, who urged on or checked the horse, not as the Duke, but as they wished; and the Prince had to put up with not a little annoyance from their want of respect, their ceaseless demands and their rough words." The Swiss were, indeed, a

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perpetual drain. Schinner drew lavishly upon his own purse in the hope of satisfying them, but the task was hopeless. They would do nothing unless they were paid and the exhausted Duchy was too poor to raise the money.

Massimiliano was not a little to blame for his foolish extravagance, squandering money upon his clothes, as upon every kind of amusement. After the battle of Ariotta he was obliged to anticipate two years revenue in order to satisfy the victorious Swiss. With much difficulty and more discontent some 60,000 ducats were raised by forced loans levied upon men of wealth according to their reputed means. Those who did not pay were arrested for a time. The reckless way in which the Duke gave away his property was another disastrous drain on his slender resources. Schinner, already Bishop of Novara, was given Vigevano, which had belonged to Trivulzio, while Lecco went to Girolamo Morone.

The death of Louis XII and the accession of Francis I, then just twenty-one, in 1514, put a different face on things. Francis was determined to lead an army into Italy and recover Milan. Prospero Colonna was made commander of the Milanese forces. He gave a famous banquet to celebrate the occasion in a wooden pavilion specially built for the purpose, richly painted and gilded. The Swiss promised to defend the Duchy for 300,000 gold ducats. This the citizens declared it was impossible to raise. So threatening did their attitude become that Schinner and the other Swiss had to take refuge in the castle. A commission of citizens was appointed and undertook to find 50,000 ducats, in return for which Massimiliano gave up to the city certain privileges, including the rights over the chief canals.

The Cardinal of Sion appeared with a powerful force of Swiss, who were promised 800,000 ducats if they won. Luck went against them from the first.

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They awaited the French near Susa, expecting that they would come by the usual routes. But Trivulzio chose another pass, said to have been the Col d'Argentière, and was thus able to defeat the Milanese troops and capture Don Prospero before the Swiss knew that he was in Italy. The French pushed on and even penetrated some way into Milan itself, but the bells were rung and the attitude of the citizens became so threatening that Trivulzio thought it wiser to retire. The Duke had thrown himself entirely upon the people, saying that they should keep the keys of the town and the nobles should pay all the taxes.

The Swiss took the only possible course and returned to Milan. There was even talk of peace, but, encouraged by Schinner and confident of victory, they marched out of the capital on September 14th, 1515, to attack the French at Marignano. They arrived two hours before sunset and endeavoured to repeat the tactics of Ariotta. They charged with their irresistible fury and gained considerable ground, capturing some of the guns. The battle raged for four hours into the night, when, as if by common consent, the fighting ceased, without any signal, and both sides withdrew to rest. It was renewed at sunrise, but the French then made better use of their guns and of the Gascon arrows. The appearance of Bartolomeo d'Alviano, with the Venetian light horse, decided the day. Cardona, convinced that the French would win, had made no effort to hold up these reinforcements. Their arrival was too much for the Swiss, magnificent fighters though they had proved themselves. They retired doggedly on Milan. As they entered, utterly worn out, dripping wet from the waist downwards, covered with dust above, the kindly citizens, forgetful of their plundering habits and their grasping insistence on immediate pay, stood at their doors to offer them food and wine. Trivulzio

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declared that it was a battle of giants. The other eighteen battles in which he had fought were child's play by comparison.

The Cardinal of Sion went back to Switzerland, taking with him the Count of Pavia, Francesco Sforza, who had impressed people as a much more serious person than his brother. Francesco remained at Innsbruck. Massimiliano shut himself up in the castle. It could have stood a long siege, but as there was no prospect of relief, it would have been useless to hold out. Terms were soon arranged. Massimiliano was to resign all claims to the Dukedom and to reside in France, where he was to have a pension of 30,000 ducats a year. On leaving the castle he is said to have remarked that he was glad to escape from his slavery to the Swiss, the ill-treatment of the Emperor and the treachery of the Spaniards—"a man who, for his incapacity, his folly and his mean habits was unworthy of all greatness", comments Guicciardini. Miss Ady¹ gives an interesting account from the Harleian MSS of the interview between him and Francis I. The King was about to sit down to supper after returning from hunting when Massimiliano was brought in by the Grand Constable. Francis rose, lifted his cap and embraced him. The Duke then talked of taking orders in order to allay all suspicion of a desire to retain the Duchy. Francis expressed surprise, promising to find him a suitable wife himself, should he desire to marry.

Francis enjoyed himself thoroughly in Milan, hunting, playing *pallone* and sampling the ladies. So anxious was he to investigate the charms of La Brognina that he commissioned the Bishop of Nice to carry her off from her convent. The Bishop was provided with a forged pardon from the Pope for the sin she was about to commit. The Mantua authorities were obliged to shut their eyes to the rape. La

¹ *Milan under the Sforza*, p. 219.

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Brognina came sorely against her will. On the way they fell in with some Spaniards, whereupon she made herself known to them and implored their protection. Without hesitation they rescued her and gave the Bishop a sound thrashing. Francis was very angry with him for having bungled matters. He fled to Mantua. Such was his fear of either a French or a Spanish dagger that for some time he lived on a boat in the middle of the lake there.

Once again the Milanese found that the French were as hard and as expensive task-masters as the Swiss. Francis levied 100,000 ducats in the first year and twice as much in the second. Lautrec, the new governor, far surpassed all his predecessors in harshness and brutality. There were constant executions and proscriptions and many of the wealthiest citizens went into exile. The aged Trivulzio ventured to protest, whereupon Lautrec accused him of plotting with the Swiss. Called to France to answer the charges in mid-winter—he was over eighty—he did not long survive. It is also said that Galeazzo Sanseverino, now Grand Écuyer, helped to poison the King's mind against him.

The Count of Pavia was recognized as heir by the enemies of France. He was serious, almost austere, and a complete contrast to his brother. His health was poor. In 1517 he was described as well educated, energetic and wise. Massimiliano was jealous of him. Prato tells a story to the effect that the Duke, seeing Francesco leaning thoughtfully out of a window, suddenly exclaimed to him, "Sir, I know that you are aiming at becoming Duke of Milan; but get that idea out of your head, for I promise you on the word of a gentleman that I will make an end of you."

The change came in 1521. Charles V was now Emperor and the new Pope, Leo X, saw that he would prove a more valuable ally than the King of France. War between them was inevitable. Charles realized



MEDALS OF ISABELLA D'ARAGONA AND FRANCESCO SFORZA II

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that it would be easier for him to control the Duchy of Milan through a Duke whose name had such associations as the Sforza, than to rule it directly. The Pope and the Emperor both advanced Francesco money for raising troops. Lautrec now made a raid upon Reggio, where the historian, Francesco Guicciardini, commanded, but was repulsed by the Papal forces. About this time Filarete's tower over the main gate of the castle of Milan, where a quantity of powder was stored, blew up, killing some three hundred Frenchmen and covering the square with ruins. This was taken as an omen, for the explosion occurred on the Eve of S. Peter's Day, as the Pope was careful to point out. The Swiss under Lautrec deserted him when they did not receive their pay, whereas those with the League remained loyal, thanks largely to the efforts of the indefatigable Schinner. Lautrec made a stand by the River Adda, but Giovanni dei Medici, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the son of Caterina Sforza, boldly crossed it at the head of his men and drove him back, with the result that French rule in Lombardy collapsed. According to Guicciardini the allies could not understand how a victory so complete had been won so easily.

Francesco now advanced by the Brenner and Verona and Mantua. The Milanese had formed a high opinion of him and when he entered Milan on April 4th, 1421, he was welcomed with incredible delight, says Guicciardini, "for he embodied in men's eyes the memory of the happiness the people had enjoyed under his father and the other Sforza Dukes". Never was there such a triumph, says the chronicler Grumello, who saw it. The ringing of bells and the firing of guns were enough to bring the world down in ruins. The nobles, the merchants and the common people vied with one another in bringing jewels, money, and other valuables to provide pay for the

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army ; and, wonder of wonders, all these gifts were duly recorded and the debt repaid later by the new Duke.

No less enthusiasm was shown when Lautrec, having once again brought his Swiss to heel, advanced from Monza. The Milanese force of 6,000 men, commanded by Prospero Colonna, was full of fight. The preaching of Fra Andrea Barbato, who had been urging the people of Milan to sacrifice their lives in order to drive out the foreigner, had proved very effective in heartening them. They were entrenched in a walled villa, with deep ditches round it, called the Bicocca. Lautrec endeavoured to prevent his Swiss from attacking, as the ditches were too deep for them to be able to do so successfully, but, with their old confidence, they insisted. They went on to the attack again and again with the utmost daring, but their efforts were useless against the well-placed artillery, while they suffered heavily from the fire of the Spanish infantry. They were obliged to abandon the attempt. The Spaniards and Milanese were too prudent to follow them into the open and they retired unmolested over the Alps to their own country. The Duchy, except for the castle of Milan, was now in the hands of the Spaniards. When this surrendered in 1523 it was occupied by Francesco.

In August, 1523, the Duke was returning to Milan from Monza. Bidding his guards follow at a distance on account of the dust, he rode on with one of his chamberlains, Bonifazio Visconti, with whom he was on intimate terms. Visconti had more than one grievance against him and when they reached a cross-roads he drew a dagger and struck at his head. Owing to the restiveness of his mount the blow caught the Duke on the shoulder. The wound was very slight and Francesco received a great ovation on his return to Milan. In some quarters the Duke's later ill-health was ascribed to the fact that the dagger had

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been poisoned, but there hardly seems sufficient grounds for the suspicion.

In 1524 the French made another unsuccessful attempt to recover the Duchy, but they left disaster in their track. Abbiategrasso was captured from them with much dash by the Milanese under the eyes of their Duke, and it was from there that they brought back the plague which carried off some 80,000 inhabitants. There was little chance of the afflicted city being able to put up an effective resistance against Francis I when he appeared at the head of a fresh army in the spring of 1525. Bidding the Milanese not to provoke the French uselessly, Francesco withdrew to Cremona, where was Lanoy, the Viceroy of Naples, who was the Spanish commander-in-chief. The French behaved as usual, in spite of the King's express orders that the people of Milan were not to be ill-treated.

Antonio de Leyva was in Pavia with the best of the troops, besieged by the French. The inhabitants were heart and soul with the Spaniards, even the women being ready to make any sacrifice to defeat their hated enemy. Francis could make no headway. He tried to draw off some of the Spanish forces by sending troops against Naples, which he proposed to invade when he had recovered the Milanese. But the Marquis of Pescara, who commanded the Spanish forces outside Pavia, was far too wise to weaken his strength. The Swiss in Pavia were clamouring for their pay and provisions were running low when the arrival of the Constable of Bourbon, who had revolted from Francis I, with large reinforcements put a new face on the situation. Against the advice of his more experienced soldiers, the King decided to await the attack of the Spaniards in the Barco of Pavia. The story of the utter defeat of the French and the capture of the King is too well known to need re-telling. He refused to give his sword to the rebel Bourbon, but

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sent for Lanoy and surrendered to him. The flower of the chivalry of France was either killed or captured. Among the dead were Admiral Bonnivet, whose advice the King had unwisely followed, La Palice, La Trémouille and the Grand Ecuyer, Galeazzo Sanseverino.

Francesco returned to his capital, but he soon found that he had lost every vestige of independence. The Emperor had declared that his one object in going to war was to invest him with the Duchy. This, however, was conditional upon his paying 100,000 ducats at once and another half million in instalments. There was general indignation at the terms. No one felt the humiliation more than Girolamo Morone, whose ambition it had long been to free the Duchy from foreign control. A widespread conspiracy was formed against Charles, to which the new Medici Pope, Clement VII, was privy. Francesco Sforza also certainly knew what was on foot, but he was too seriously ill to play an active part in the movement, of which Morone was the heart and soul. The Marquis of Pescara, Francesco d'Avalos, to whom the Emperor had not given his due as the real victor of Pavia, was at first one of the conspirators, but later he changed his mind and revealed everything to de Leyva. He did not long survive this double treachery, but Charles respected his request that Morone should be spared.

Miss Ady prints two interesting letters from Massimiliano to his brother, written in August, 1526. In the first he indignantly denies ever having made the slightest effort to recover his Duchy, as that would have been contrary to his promise to his patron, Francis I. There had been talk of restoring him by some of the conspirators, but Morone would not hear of it. As long as he lives, Massimiliano declares, he will be neither Duke, nor Cardinal—it had been suggested that the Pope might give him a red hat.

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The tone of this letter is distinctly acrimonious and shows that he felt the position which Francesco had gained for himself. In the course of it he assures his brother that he is worth no more than he, Massimiliano, and that he has as good friends as Francesco. The second letter is much more resigned and conciliatory. He is reassured. He takes the opportunity of informing Francesco that he is the most contented man alive. He desires nothing more than the favour and the good grace of the Most Christian King, his lord. And this he continued to enjoy till his death in Paris in 1530, though his pension was often in arrear.

Francesco was now ordered to deliver up the castle of Milan to the Emperor until he had cleared himself of the charge of treason. Ill though he was, he refused and the Spaniards were soon besieging it and ill-treating the inhabitants in every possible way. The siege lasted for eight months. The Milanese rose more than once in fierce revolt against the oppression of the Spaniards, causing de Leyva grave anxiety. But they were not well enough organized to make a really effective resistance against such an army. De Leyva ended by banishing the most important citizens and the mob became powerless, as there was no one to lead it. When provisions were nearly exhausted Francesco surrendered. He was to have been given Como, with a sufficient revenue, as a dwelling-place, but when he found that the Spaniards were not to evacuate the town, he joined his allies at Lodi.

In January, 1527, the Constable of Bourbon, finding it impossible to squeeze anything more out of the Milanese to satisfy the clamours of his men, led them South to Rome. The sack that followed forcibly brought home to the Pope the real state of affairs. The result was a ray of hope for Lombardy, since among the conditions upon which Clement undertook to invest Charles with the Imperial title was that the Medici should be restored to Florence and Francesco

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Sforza to Milan. In November, 1529, Francesco was in Bologna, where Emperor and Pope were to meet, with the other princes who had gathered there to pay their respects to the all-powerful Charles. On being admitted to an audience he told him that, such was his confidence in his own innocence and the Emperor's generosity, that he would give him back his safe-conduct. Charles duly restored him to his Duchy, but he was ordered to pay 400,000 ducats towards the expenses of the war and another half million during the next ten years. The Emperor was to remain in possession of the castle till the 400,000 had been paid. Harder terms could scarcely have been imposed upon a defeated enemy.

When Charles left Bologna in March, 1530, Francesco came to Pavia and then to Milan, already sadly impoverished, where he received a most enthusiastic welcome. By February of the next year, thanks to the strenuous efforts and devoted self-sacrifice of the Milanese, the 400,000 ducats had been raised and the Spaniards left the castle. The Duke did all he could, though it was but a drop in the ocean, to relieve and improve the condition of his unhappy Duchy.

In 1533 Charles V paid Milan a short visit. The Duke went to the monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie, leaving his castle to his guest. The visit was of the simplest, with very little pageantry, for which the impoverished Duchy must have been thankful. But at least the Duke gave Charles a magnificent boar-hunt at Vigevano.

The Emperor now made it his business to find Francesco a wife. He ended by selecting his niece, Christina of Denmark. She had been suggested by the Milanese ambassador who had accompanied Charles to the Netherlands. The bride was a child of eleven, the bridegroom a broken invalid of thirty-eight, grey-haired, walking with a stick and at times

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deprived of the use of his limbs. The Archduchess Mary, with whom Christina lived, altogether disapproved of the match, but Charles was firm. In later days Christina was to be wooed by Henry VIII of England, for whom Holbein painted the portrait of her which is now in the National Gallery. She is said to have made the historic answer, when Henry proposed for her hand, that, had she possessed two heads, she would gladly have placed one at the disposal of His Majesty. Her dowry of 100,000 ducats was to be deducted from the money the Duke owed the Emperor.

Count Massimiliano Stampa was sent North to marry the bride by proxy. Milan rose to the occasion. Hard though the times were, the citizens were determined that their beloved Duke's bride should have a worthy reception. Special instructions were issued to the towns along her route that the roads—she was travelling by some of the worst in the Duchy—were to be repaired, the arms of the Duchess to be painted over the gates through which she passed, and a canopy was to be ready to be carried over her.¹ The bride and her ladies made the long journey in black velvet litters, drawn by horses. She spent a delightful few days at Cusago, now belonging to Massimiliano Stampa, where there were balls, hunts and a play, *La Sposa Sagace*—a faint echo of the days of Il Moro. Here her husband, Duke Francesco, paid her an informal visit.

On May 3rd, 1534, Christina made her entry into Milan by the Porta Ticinese, after the usual halt at S. Eustorgio. The procession was worthy of the best days of the Lombard capital. All the nobles were there, dressed in white. The armourers came first and the Doctors of the University, in accordance with their privilege, held the canopy over the girl bride on her white horse. There were a number of

¹ Cartwright, *Christina of Denmark*, p. 84.

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triumphal arches and the usual mythological displays. At the castle she was met by her crippled, but courteous and kindly husband. The people of Milan, who bore the additional taxes, which raised the price of food, with hardly a murmur, spent the whole night in revelry. They rarely enjoyed such a privilege, which was specially granted them by their Duke for the occasion.

The Duchess occupied Beatrice's old rooms in the Rocchetta. Francesco treated her with the utmost consideration and, in spite of the difference of age and his crippled condition, she became genuinely attached to her husband. Unfortunately he did not survive his marriage long. In the autumn of 1535 he fell seriously ill, losing the use of his hands again, and before the end of the year he was dead. He was forty years of age. He was sincerely regretted by his subjects, for with him passed the last shadow of their independence. He had desired to be laid to rest in S. Maria delle Grazie, with his parents, but his subjects insisted on giving him a magnificent funeral and burying him in the cathedral.

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